

British Columbia (1871). When the 1872 election was done and the First Session of the Second Parliament opened on 5 March 1873 the House had grown to 200 members. This occurred through the workings of sec. 51 of the British North America Act, which provided for a readjustment of Commons representation at the general election following each decennial census. The census of 1871 showed a population increase which entitled Ontario to six additional members, Nova Scotia to two and New Brunswick to one. (Quebec's representation was fixed by the Act at 65 and those of the other provinces were adjusted around the quotient provided by that figure.)

Thus the provincial representation at the beginning of the Second Parliament in March 1873 stood as follows:

Quebec	65
Ontario	88
Nova Scotia	21
New Brunswick	16
Manitoba	4
British Columbia	6
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	200

A fairly high proportion of the members of the First Parliament came back to serve in the Second: approximately 60 per cent, or 114 out of the 190 members sitting at dissolution, were re-elected.² Of the 114 members re-elected, by one count 62 had previously been supporters of the Macdonald-Cartier ministry (ministerialists) and 52 had previously voted in opposition to its policies and measures. New, first-time members of Parliament elected in 1872 changed, but did not tip, the balance between the government and the opposition.

Although the Macdonald-Cartier Conservative government had preserved its majority into the Second Parliament, its support in the Central Canadian provinces was weakened following the 1872 election. In 1867 the federal Conservative coalition led by Macdonald had had the support of perhaps 49 of the 82 members elected in Ontario; when the Second Parliament opened in March 1873 it commanded only 40 Ontario seats out of 88. In Quebec the federal Conservative coalition in 1867 could count on the votes of as many as 46, in March 1873 somewhere between 38 and 45 out of province's fixed quota of 65 members, depending on the issue. In contrast the Liberal coalition in opposition swelled its federal representation from the Central Canadian provinces in 1872. In Ontario they had elected 33 out of 82 members to the First Parliament, but 48 out of 88 to the Second. In Quebec the opposition also gained some traction through the 1872 election; it maintained its 1867 level of 18 supporters elected, but in March 1873 could sometimes count on as many as 27 Quebec votes in the House of Commons.

However, the governing Conservative coalition had made up for its electoral losses in Central Canada in 1872 by enrolling new members from Manitoba and British Columbia, and had also gained supporters in the Commons, though not under the same party label, in the two Maritime provinces. After the 1872 election returns were in, the Macdonald-Cartier coalition, which in 1867 had elected by various counts between 102 and 108 supporters out of the 181 members of the first House of Commons, still could count in March 1873 on between 101 and 104 core

² Because of a disputed by-election during the 1872 session a Manitoba riding was vacant, and there were only 190 members in the Commons when the election for the Second Parliament was called.