

to the House and are responsible to it. They are called upon to explain their conduct and policies daily while the House is in session, especially during the question period. Their positions depend on the confidence of the House. If the House votes lack of confidence in them, they must resign or bring on an immediate election. Through the latter device they can appeal the verdict of the House to the voters at large. This happened in May 1974, when the Government was defeated in the House of Commons and then obtained from the Governor General a dissolution of Parliament so that a new federal general election could take place July 8.

If five years pass without an election, Parliament is dissolved through the expiry of its mandate, and an election automatically becomes necessary. More often, before the end of this term, the Prime Minister fixes an election date. Prime Ministers do not like to appear fearful of an election by putting it off until required to call one. Normally, an election takes place four years or so after the previous one. In a minority-government situation, however (where no party has an absolute majority in the House of Commons), the vote is likely to come sooner, since the Government is more vulnerable.

Election arrangements

The dissolution of Parliament sets the complicated election machinery in motion. Essentially, it consists of an Office headed by the Chief Electoral Officer in Ottawa and a returning officer for each constituency. Each returning officer is responsible for the conduct of the election in his constituency.

As insurance against being caught unprepared, the Chief Electoral Officer starts to get ready for a new election as soon as the last one is over. A general election requires the production of several tons of paper material, such as background papers, manuals of instruction and forms of many kinds.

When the date is set, appropriate quantities of these materials are shipped to the constituencies. Returning officers complete plans for the recording of the votes cast in their areas, set up polling divisions and polling stations, assign enumerators to compile lists of eligible voters, and appoint deputy returning officers. The voter lists are posted in public places so that anyone may check them for