

writes" that brings polling to a close. This period includes seven days allotted for compiling an official list of voters (citizens over 18 years old) in each polling division, which in the past was mainly accomplished by enumerators going door-to-door. In this election, for the first time, enumeration is allowed by mail or fax.

Canada is divided into 295 electoral districts or ridings, each represented by one seat in the House of Commons. Any number of candidates may contest a riding, and the one receiving the largest number of votes (not necessarily a majority), wins. The Governor General asks the leader of the party winning a majority of the seats in the House of Commons to form a government. The party with the second highest number of seats usually assumes the position of Official Opposition. Under this "first past the post" system, the governing party

often wins a majority of seats with less than half the popular vote. The system favours the rise of strong third parties which may regularly win a significant number of seats in Parliament without ever forming a government. A party must hold at least 12 seats to be accorded "official" status in Parliament.

When no party has a majority of seats, the one with the largest number forms a government and hopes it can maintain the confidence of enough members from other parties to stay in power. If it is defeated on a major vote (designated a vote of "confidence"), it must either resign, with the leader of the Opposition forming a new government, or advise the Governor General to call an election. Third parties can thus find their influence greatly expanded when they hold the balance of power under a minority government.

PARTY STANDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS On September 8, 1993

Total:	295
Progressive Conservative	153
Liberal Party	79
New Democratic Party	43
Bloc Québécois	8
Reform Party	1
Independent Conservative	1
Independent	2
Vacant	8

TRADE

The Conservatives negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Conservative-majority Parliament passed enabling legislation for the agreement in June.

The Liberals have said they would renegotiate NAFTA and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to strengthen dispute settlement provisions and ensure Canada has the same control over energy resources that Mexico retained in NAFTA negotiations.

The NDP would not proceed with NAFTA and would abrogate the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. It would try to negotiate sectoral trade agreements with the U.S. instead.

The party supports free trade in principle and has endorsed the Free Trade Agreement but has said it would not implement NAFTA until Canada's control over its water resources is made explicit in both agreements.

The Bloc has expressed general support for NAFTA. It advocates transition measures to help retrain workers.

DEFENCE

Campbell has announced that her government would cut the planned purchase of EH-101 helicopters from 50 to 43 and would cut defence spending by \$100 million per year.

The Liberals would cancel the entire \$5.8-billion purchase of new helicopters and upgrade existing ones instead. Additional unspecified cuts of \$1.6 billion would be made in the \$12-billion defence budget.

An NDP government would make peacekeeping the primary military role of the Canadian Forces. It would cut 3% a year from defence spending by pulling Canada out of NATO and NORAD, cancelling the helicopter purchase and reviewing other procurement plans, reducing the size of the forces and closing military bases. Funds saved would be redirected to foreign aid, the United Nations, arms control, and search and rescue.

The Reform plan calls for cutting defence spending through increased efficiency and lower administrative costs while maintaining strong, well-equipped forces.

The Bloc has not specified where it would take \$3 billion out of the defence budget other than cancelling the helicopter program.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Campbell has vowed to maintain Canada's social safety net while modernizing programs to eliminate waste and reward effort. She has said her government would discuss a basic overhaul of social programs with the Canadian people and the provinces after the election.

The Liberals have pledged to maintain the current system of universal health care without the imposition of user fees. Once the rate of economic growth reaches 3%, they would create 150,000 subsidized day care spaces if cost-sharing could be negotiated with the provinces. They would increase funding for native programs, literacy, women's health and youth programs, while cutting old-age pensions for high-income Canadians.

The NDP promises to rebuild Canada's social programs by stabilizing transfer payments to the provinces, refocusing the health care system to emphasize prevention, establishing a national child care program, rescinding eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance, introducing a national cooperative housing program and funding the construction of 10,000 new housing units a year.

The Reform Party has said it would redirect spending to those with the greatest need. It has promised to preserve national technical standards and federal spending for universal health care but would allow each province to devise its own rules, including user fees. It would guarantee a secure pension for senior citizens with no other source of income, but would make other programs, such as unemployment insurance and the Canada Pension Plan, self-financing.

The Bloc believes the provinces, not the federal government, should control spending on social programs such as health care and unemployment insurance.