

Federal Ministers

Jean Chrétien Prime Minister of Canada

Born in Shawinigan, Quebec, on Jan. 11, 1934, Jean Chrétien studied law at Laval University and was called to the bar in 1958. He joined a Shawinigan law firm and was director of the bar of Trois-Rivières in 1962-63.

Mr. Chrétien was first elected to the House of Commons in 1963. After being re-elected in 1965, he was appointed parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and, in 1966, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance. In 1967, he became a minister of state attached to the Minister of Finance and, in 1968, he was appointed Minister of National Revenue.

Re-elected five times between 1968 and 1980, Mr. Chrétien held a number of cabinet portfolios, among them Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Industry, Trade and Commerce; Finance; Justice; and Energy, Mines and Resources. He was President of the Treasury Board from 1974 until 1976, and he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs in 1984.

Following the election of 1984, the Liberals formed the official Opposition and Mr. Chrétien served as critic for external affairs. In 1986 he left politics. From 1986 to 1990, he was a counsel with the law firm of Lang Michener Lawrence and Shaw. He was also a senior advisor with Gordon Capital Corp.

In 1990, Mr. Chrétien returned to politics and was elected Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. In the same year, he was elected to the House of Commons in a byelection and sworn in as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Chrétien was re-elected to the House of Commons for the Quebec riding of Saint-Maurice in 1993, when his party won a majority of seats in the House. He became the 20th Prime Minister of Canada on Nov. 4, 1993. He was returned as Prime Minister for a second term in the election of 1997.

Mr. Chrétien married Aline Chainé of Shawinigan in 1957. They have three children.