# Brian Mulroney forms new government after landslide win in federal election

Canada has a new government and a new prime minister.

On September 4, Canadians went to the polls and by a huge majority chose Brian Mulroney, the 45-year-old leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, to form the next federal government.

Mr Mulroney becomes Canada's 18th prime minister. His victory not only brought to an end 21 years of nearly uninterrupted rule by the Liberal Party, but it also gives the Liberals their worst defeat since Confederation.

Brian Mulroney, a relative newcomer to Canadian politics, won the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party in June, 1983. In August of that year, he was elected to the House of Commons. Until then, he had never held elective office, although he had been active in party politics and community affairs since his college days.

A native of Baie Comeau, Quebec, Mr Mulroney worked his way through university in Nova Scotia (where he studied political science) and in Quebec City (where he studied law), then practiced law in Montreal until 1976. That year he joined the Iron Ore Company of Canada (first as vice-president, then as president) where he remained until his leadership win.

The man he defeated in the federal election is John Turner, who became leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Canada in June of this year, following the resignation of Pierre Trudeau.

Mr Turner, 55, held several portfolios in the Trudeau government, including justice and finance, but he resigned from Parliament in 1975 to spend the next nine years practicing corporate law in Toronto.

The Conservatives now hold 211 of the 282 seats in the House of Commons. The Liberals have 40. And the socialist New Democratic Party has 30. (There is one independent.)

In the previous federal election, held in 1980, the Liberals won 147 seats; the Conservatives 103; and the New Democratic Party 32.

## Pattern of voting now been broken

The key to the Conservatives' victory is that it broke a pattern of voting that has prevailed in Canadian politics for much of this century.



*Canada's new Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney*

Canadian political life, following Confederation in 1867, was dominated by the Conservatives, but two events helped tip the balance against them. During World War 1, they were strong supporters of a military draft, and that alienated voters in Quebec. Later on, they had the misfortune to be in power during the Great Depression. That, too, cut into their popularity, and since 1935 they have been forced to live in the shadow of the Liberals.

The Liberals have been in power for 42 of the last 49 years, losing only to John Diefenbaker (1957-63) and to Joe Clark (1979-80).

In recent years, the Liberals' base has increasingly been concentrated in Quebec. In the 1980 election, they won 70 of the province's 71 seats. The Conservatives took one.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have emerged as the dominant party in the West. In the 1980 election, they won 43 seats in the three western provinces, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Liberals took none.

It was this political imbalance that was shattered during the 1984 election, as the Tories invaded the Liberals' stronghold, picking up 58 seats in Quebec and leaving just 17 for the Liberals. At the same time, they held their own ground, and indeed made gains in every province except Alberta (where they already held all 21 seats).

The result: The Conservatives now have the largest majority government in Canadian political history.

| Here's how the parties now stand in the House of Commons | Province | Progressive Conservatives | Liberals | NDP | Independent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | British Columbia | 19 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
| | Alberta | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Saskatchewan | 9 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| | Manitoba | 9 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| | Ontario | 67 | 14 | 13 | 1 |
| | Quebec | 58 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| | New Brunswick | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Nova Scotia | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | Prince Edward Island | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Newfoundland | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| | Yukon | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | North West Territories | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Total** | **211** | **40** | **30** | **1** |