

## OVERVIEW OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S POLITICAL STRUCTURE

### British Columbia:

Each of Canada's 10 provinces has its own elected government with responsibilities that include education. In British Columbia, provincial elections are generally held every four years, and the next election is scheduled to take place in October 2021. As of January 2020, there was speculation that an early election might be called due to the resignation of the leader of the Green Party, which called into question the longevity of the governing coalition (see below);<sup>1</sup> the coalition currently remains intact, however, because the election of a new Green Party leader was postponed to at least September 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The province is governed by an 85-person legislature (with members known as "MLAs"), from which a prime minister (Premier) and a cabinet of about two dozen ministers are chosen. The lieutenant-governor, the Queen's representative in the province, is technically the highest position in the province, but it is largely a symbolic title.<sup>2</sup> Typically, the leader of the political party with the most MLAs becomes the Premier. The Premier appoints MLAs from his or her party as cabinet ministers, who are in charge of the ministries in the public service.<sup>3</sup>

British Columbia politics is largely a two-party system. Since 2000, the two major parties are the Liberals and the New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP held control from 1991 to 2001. Then the Liberals governed until 2017, when the NDP in coalition with the Green Party regained control. The Liberals hold 42 seats in the legislature, the NDP 41 seats, and the Green Party two seats.<sup>4</sup> Two additional seats are held by Independents. Together, the NDP and the Green Party hold a narrow majority of seats, allowing them to form a government. The agreement between the NDP and the Green Party to form a governing coalition is known as the Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA).<sup>5</sup>

The current Premier of British Columbia, John Horgan, took office in 2017. He is a member of the NDP and has been leader of the party since 2014. His priorities as premier include increasing affordable housing and moderating the real estate market; providing child care fee reductions and creating new licensed child care slots; and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vancouversun.com/news/politics/parties-prepare-for-possibility-of-spring-election-as-green-leadership-changes>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/politics-in-british-columbia>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/office-of-the-premier>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-bc-greens/head-of-british-columbia-green-party-which-supports-government-to-step-down-as-leader-idUSKBN1WM23Z>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.citynews1130.com/2020/06/29/three-years-since-ndp-made-deal-with-greens/>

eliminating Medical Services Plan fees (British Columbia's public health insurance plan).<sup>6</sup>

### **Canada:**<sup>7</sup>

Canada is a constitutional monarchy. The symbolic head of state is Queen Elizabeth II; her representative in Canada is the governor-general, who is appointed on the advice of the Canadian Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is typically the leader of the party that holds the largest share of seats in the lower house of Parliament (see below).

Canada has a bicameral parliament. The House of Commons, the lower house, is made up of 338 members elected from individual constituencies; the Senate is made up of 105 members appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the Prime Minister. Currently, the Liberal Party has the largest share of seats in the House of Commons (157), followed by the Conservative Party of Canada (121), the Bloc Québécois (32), the NDP (24), the Green Party (3), and one Independent.<sup>8</sup>

The current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, was elected leader of the Liberal Party in 2013 and Prime Minister in 2015. For his first term as Prime Minister, Trudeau led a parliamentary majority. In Canada's most recent national election, held in October 2019, the Liberal Party won a second term with Trudeau as Prime Minister but lost its parliamentary majority. The next election will be held in 2023.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://news.gov.bc.ca/office-of-the-premier/biography>

<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from "[Canada: Political Forces at a Glance](#)," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, December 4, 2019

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en/party-standings>