

VOTING

in Québec



LE DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL
DES ÉLECTIONS DU QUÉBEC



Québec is a democratic society. In a democracy, all citizens are equal and have certain fundamental freedoms that are guaranteed by the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The charters also protect the right to vote and the right to be a candidate in an election.

The citizens of Québec therefore have the real power and responsibility of choosing the people who will govern them.

Québec's political system is independent of any religious influence.

Many features of Québec's parliamentary system are inspired by the British system.

Québec has its own government in Québec City. The province is a member of the Canadian federation, which has a central government in Ottawa.



The Chief Electoral Officer of Québec

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Two forms of Democracy

For major decisions, democracy takes one of the following two forms:

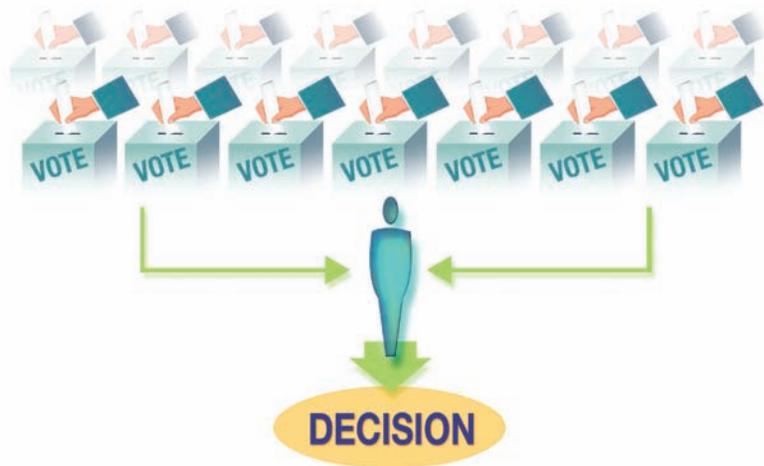
Direct democracy

Where citizens are involved directly in the decision, for example by means of a referendum;



Representative democracy

Where citizens vote in an election to choose representatives who will make decisions on their behalf.



CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT

A State is a huge organization. To ensure that it is managed efficiently, the citizens appoint representatives who will make decisions on their behalf concerning issues related to life in society. This is known as representative democracy.

The Electoral Map

The territory of Québec has been subdivided into a total of 125 electoral divisions or ridings, each bearing a different name. Every electoral division comprises approximately 40,000 electors.

Candidates and Political Parties

The electors in each of the 125 electoral divisions choose a candidate to represent them in the National Assembly.



When an election is held, several candidates stand for election in each electoral division. The candidate who obtains the most votes becomes the Member of the National Assembly representing his or her electoral division.

Anyone who is entitled to vote may stand for election, on certain conditions.

A candidate may be a member of a political party or stand as an independent. A political party is composed of members who share similar values and ideas and support similar projects.



Election Results

The party that has the highest number of elected members takes power and forms the government. Its leader becomes Premier of Québec.

All the other members form the opposition. The party that has the second highest number of elected members, after the party in power, becomes the Official Opposition. Its leader becomes Leader of the Opposition.



The 125 elected members sit in the National Assembly. Together with the lieutenant governor, the National Assembly forms the Parliament.



THE THREE POWERS

Québec's political system is based on three separate powers known as the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power.

The Legislative Power

The legislative power is exercised at the National Assembly. Laws are passed or amended during public parliamentary sessions. The National Assembly is composed of 125 members elected by the population.



The Executive Power



The executive power is exercised by the Premier and by the ministers he or she selects from among the elected members of his party. The ministers oversee their respective government departments, manage the civil servants and enforce legislation. They make the decisions required to ensure the proper operation of the government.



The Judicial Power

The judicial power is exercised by the courts. The judges who sit in the various courts of Québec are appointed by the executive power. They make their rulings on the basis of the law, independently of any political considerations.

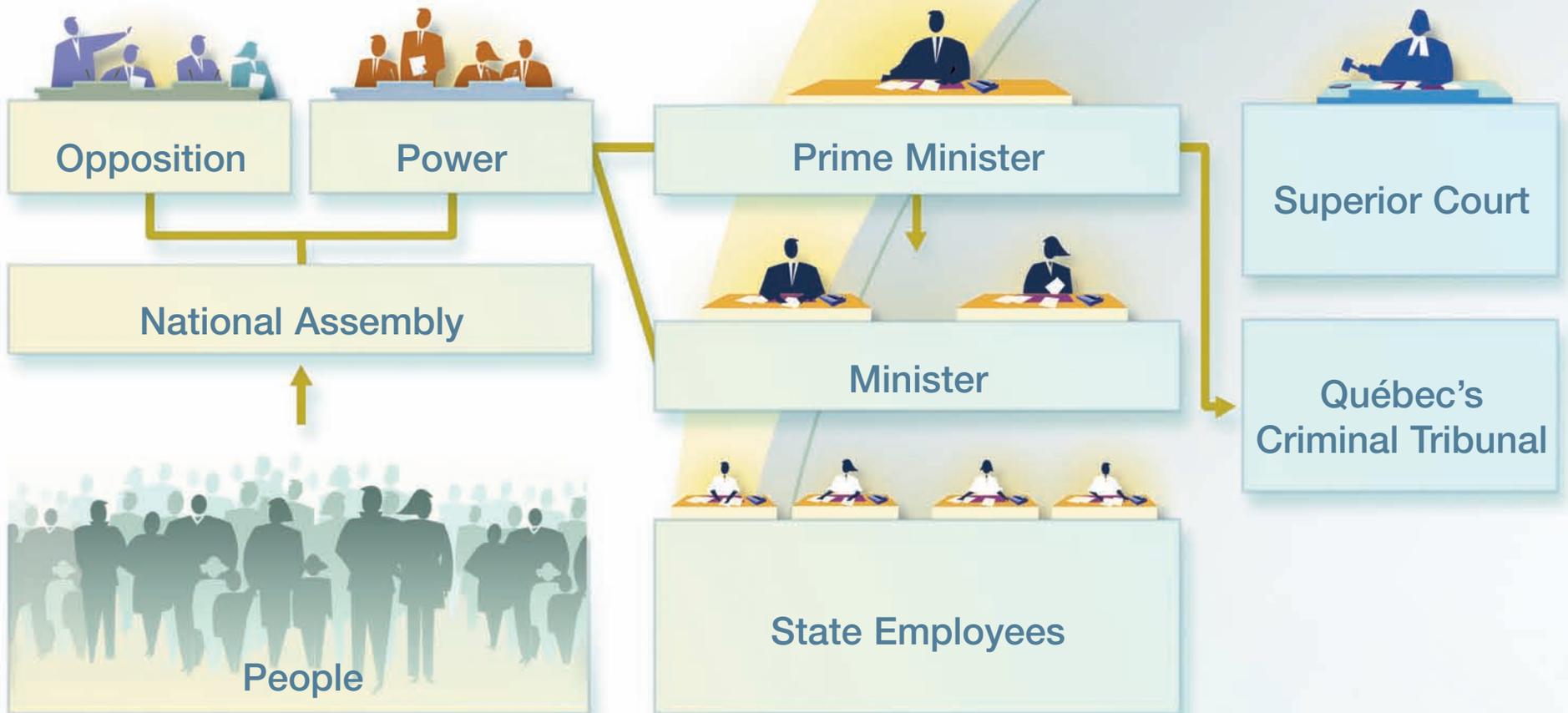
A balance must be achieved between these three powers so that one does not have excessive control over the others. Such a balance guarantees the quality of democratic life.

Diagram on next page

Legislative Power

Executive Power

Judicial Power



EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The Right to Vote

To be able to vote in Québec, three conditions must be met by a citizen:

- be a Canadian citizen;
- have been domiciled in Québec for at least six months;
- be at least 18 years of age.

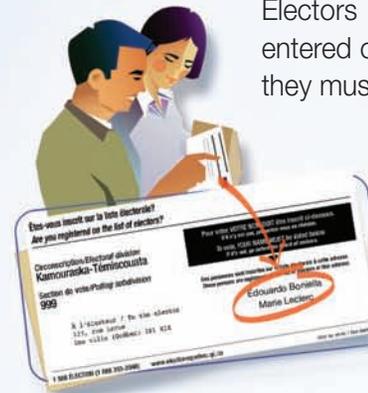
He or she must also be entered on the list of electors on election day. The list of electors is a permanent list kept up-to-date by the Chief Electoral Officer. Electors may check the list at any time to make sure their names are entered.



To help citizens exercise their right to vote, the Chief Electoral Officer distributes the following documents to every home in Québec during the election period:

• A notice of entry on the list of electors

Electors must make sure their names are entered correctly on the notice. If necessary, they must go to the revision office to register or correct their entry not later than four days prior to polling day.



• An Elector's Handbook

This leaflet contains information to help electors exercise their right to vote.

• A reminder card

This card tells electors where to go in order to vote. It also lists the candidates standing for election in the electoral division.

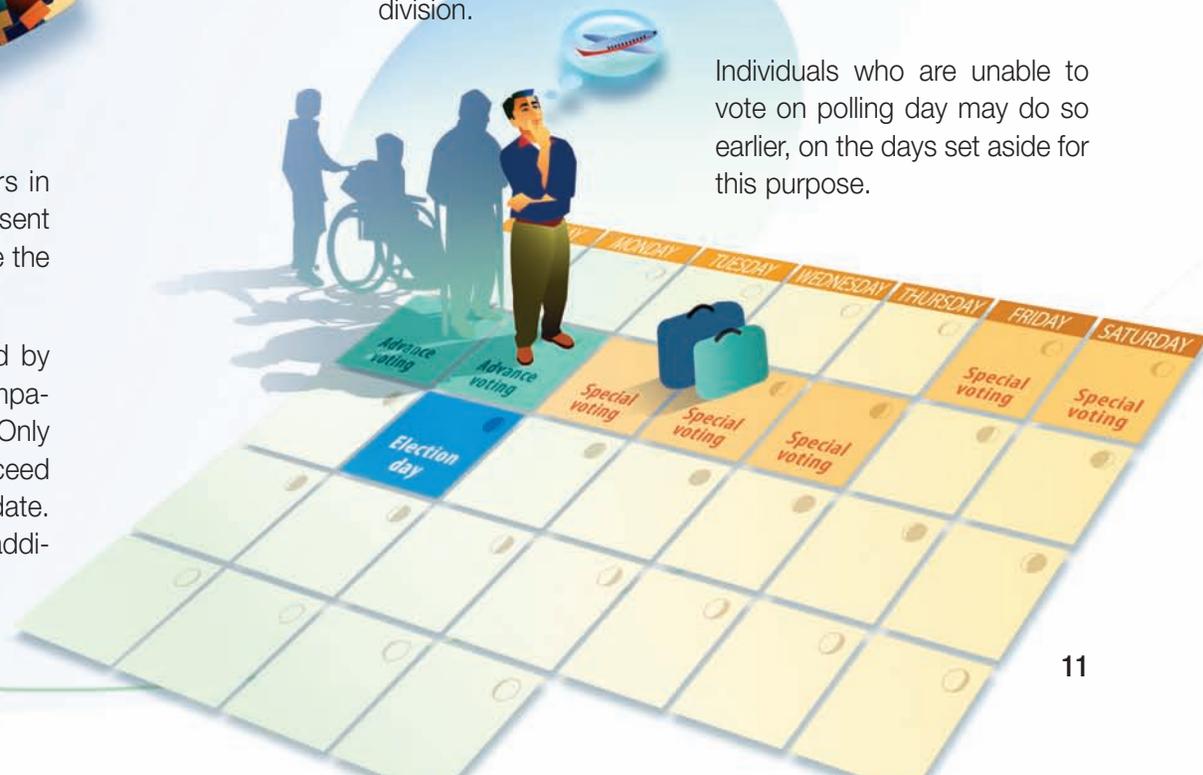
Individuals who are unable to vote on polling day may do so earlier, on the days set aside for this purpose.

The Election Period

The election period begins the day after the order-in-council is issued and ends on polling day, after all the polling offices have closed.

During this period, candidates file their nomination papers in their respective electoral divisions. The political parties present their election programs and each candidate tries to convince the electors to vote for him or her.

Election expenses and political party funding are controlled by the Chief Electoral Officer. The Election Act states that companies and trade unions cannot contribute to party funding. Only individual electors may make contributions which cannot exceed \$100 per year for each political party or independent candidate. However, during an election, it is possible to contribute an additional \$100.



Polling Day

Electors must go to the location where the vote will take place, between 9:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

- When showing up, they are told to which table (polling station) to use. They must go to the table unaccompanied;
- At the table, they are asked to present one of the following proofs of identity:
 - their Québec health insurance card;
 - their Québec driver's licence;
 - their Canadian passport;
 - their Canadian Forces identification card;
 - their certificate of Indian status.



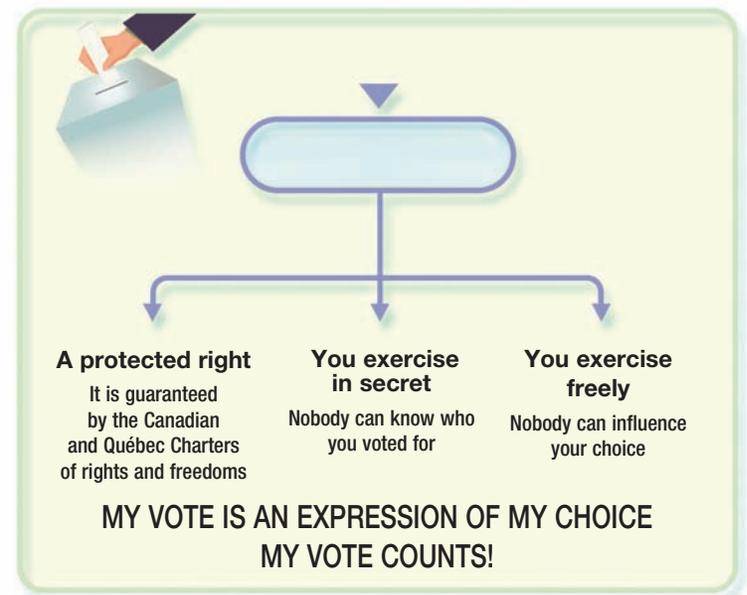
Once the people at the table have checked that the elector is entered on the list of electors, he or she is authorized to vote.

- The deputy returning officer hands over a folded ballot;
- The elector goes to the polling booth, unfolds the ballot, secretly indicates his or her choice, and refolds the ballot;
- The elector goes back to the same table, tears off the ballot stub and hands it to the deputy returning officer;
- The elector then places the folded ballot into the ballot box.



REMINDER

- Voting is both a right and a responsibility.
- When you vote, you are
 - taking part in the democratic process;
 - helping to select society's political leaders;
 - helping to build a fair and equitable society;
 - fulfilling your duty as a citizen.



The Chief Electoral Officer is the custodian of democracy in Québec, an impartial and neutral adjudicator who oversees the smooth running of elections. He or she is appointed by the Members of the National Assembly and is represented in every electoral division by a returning officer.



TERMINOLOGY

Ballot: A paper showing the names of the candidates, on which electors secretly indicate their choice.

Candidate: A person who stands for election in an electoral division. He or she may be a member of a political party or an independent candidate.

Democracy: A political system in which all people have equal rights and have the power to choose their representatives.

Deputy returning officer: The person in charge of a polling station. He or she hands the ballots to the electors and counts the votes after the election.

Election period: The period preceding polling day, during which candidates try to convince the electors to vote for them.

Elector: A person who is entitled to vote.

Electoral division: A subdivision of the territory of Québec containing approximately 40,000 electors.

Lieutenant governor: The representative of the Queen of Canada within the Parliament. Its role, which is mainly symbolic, consists mostly in sanctioning of laws.

List of electors: A list of the names and addresses of electors, drawn up by the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec.

Member of the National Assembly: A candidate elected in an electoral division to represent its population at the National Assembly.

National Assembly: The place where members of the party in power and the opposition parties sit to pass laws (the legislative power).

Notice of entry: A notice mailed to electors at the beginning of the election period, so that they can make sure their names appear correctly on the list of electors.

Official opposition: The political party that ranks second in an election.

Parliament: The name given to the group of assemblies holding the legislative power. Québec has only one such assembly, the National Assembly.

Party in power: The political party that has the most members elected in an election. Its leader becomes the Premier.

Political party: A group of people who seek to exercise power and defend the same ideas.

Poll: All the operations leading to the casting of votes by individual persons.

Polling booth: The place where an elector goes alone to cast a secret vote.

Premier or Prime Minister: The leader of the party that won the elections. The Premier heads the government.

Referendum: A consultation of all electors to approve or reject a measure proposed by the executive power.

Reminder card: A card mailed to electors a few days before polling day, reminding them of the date of the election and informing them of the place they should go to vote.

Returning officer: A person selected by means of a public competition to represent the Chief Electoral Officer in an electoral division.



For further information, please call:
(toll-free)

1 888 ELECTION
1 888 353-2846

 TDD Deaf or hard of hearing people
may call toll free at 1 800 537-0644

www.electionsequbec.qc.ca
info@electionsequbec.qc.ca

The Chief Electoral
Officer of Québec
Édifice René-Lévesque
3460, rue de La Pérade
Québec (Québec)
G1X 3Y5