



# Canada Report

André Lecours, Andrew Sharpe,  
Martin Thunert (Coordinator)

## Sustainable Governance Indicators 2022

©vege - stock.adobe.com

## Executive Summary

In terms of sustainable governance, Canada's performance is, overall, very good.

The country's public policies are generally strong and sustainable. On the economic policy front, the pandemic brought the most severe and rapid economic decline since the Great Depression. An array of fiscal measures and income supports were quickly established as a bulwark against even greater losses and, by the third quarter of 2021, the economy had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, a new wave associated with Omicron has begun to threaten those gains and may well require the continuing need for targeted measures. The country's social policies are generally successful in reducing inequality and promoting inclusion. Its education and pension systems are particularly strong. During the pandemic, the federal government developed several new temporary measures of income support, most notably the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. The pandemic exposed the weakness of the country's employment insurance program and debates over reform have since been reignited. Healthcare offers very good coverage but the provincially-run healthcare systems are perpetually strained, a situation compounded by the pandemic. The pandemic also exposed the long-term care system in several provinces, most notably Québec and Ontario, as massive failures and the federal government is considering imposing national norms, a rarity in the Canadian federation. Environmental policy is challenging to formulate and implement. In July 2021, the federal government committed to cutting the country's greenhouse gas emission by 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030. Ambitious climate change policies (such as carbon taxing) are typically opposed by the oil producing provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, sometimes causing serious intergovernmental conflict in the Canadian federation.

The quality of democracy in Canada is high. There are many opportunities to participate in politics in several different ways. The rule of law and rights protection are robust. There remains significant issues. Social movements, such as Black Lives Matter Canada, have challenged the notion that Canada is free of discrimination and argued there exists systemic racism, an idea endorsed by most of the Canadian political class (including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau). Indigenous peoples, who have historically been oppressed

and marginalized by the Canadian state, argue that they are in a colonial situation, and several high-profile instances of racism and discrimination against Indigenous Canadians unfolded in 2020-2021. Mass graves of Indigenous children stemming from so-called residential schools (meant to assimilate Indigenous youth) were discovered in British Columbia and Saskatchewan in these years, prompting renewed horror in the country. The federal government's commitment to "reconciliation" with Indigenous peoples is one of the most fundamental challenges of democratic life in the country.

Governance defined as executive capacity is strong and has proven relatively adept at weathering the challenges of the pandemic. Both the federal and provincial levels of government have, for the most part, availed themselves of both expert scientific and economic advice. Moreover, there has been a renewed vigor in federal/provincial/territorial communication and even First Ministers' coordination, although significant tensions remain over issues of resources and provincial jurisdictional authority. Even rollout of IT infrastructure, despite significant past challenges, has proven remarkably adept in providing new programming and supporting a federal workforce that has moved offsite. In terms of executive accountability, governance in Canada is good. There exists several effective supervisory bodies; the media allows for a diversity of voices from civil society to be heard, and legislators are given adequate resources to do their work. This being said, the strength of party discipline combined with frequent majority governments (the result of the uninominal majoritarian electoral system, or first-past-the post) create a very strong executive on which there are few effective checks. The upper house, the Senate of Canada, is appointed rather than elected, and it lacks the legitimacy necessary to exercise its considerable constitutional powers. Political parties tend to have a hierarchical structure that protects the leader, and therefore the prime minister, against internal challenges. This being said, the existence of a constitutionalized Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the federal structure of the country represent effective checks on the power of the executive.

## Key Challenges

In September 2021, Canadian voters cast their ballots in the midst of a pandemic and with many wondering why the election was even being called. The reelected minority Liberal government now faces some of the greatest challenges since the Great Depression.

On the economic front, the current environment is very uncertain. While Canada's traditional strength around macroeconomic stability has served the country well in the pandemic providing fiscal room for emergency measures, the federal deficit has now increased to 47.5% of GDP. Moreover, even though the economy had begun to rebound, the new Omicron wave has precipitated new closures. The government will need to steer a clearly designated path with well-defined indicators that can deliver on the 2026-27 debt reduction plan and that can effectively target where income and business supports may be needed. As for Canada's relationship with the United States, this has stabilized after the renegotiation of NAFTA but frictions around trade – and American sourcing – remain.

Two sources of territorial tensions in the federation will need to be carefully managed. The first is so-called Western alienation (feelings in Western provinces, most importantly Alberta, that their interests are not looked after in the federation), which has experienced a strong revival in recent years due to the Alberta government considering that other partners in the federations are hurting its economy by preventing the development of pipelines to take the province's oil to the Canadian East and West coast so it can be exported to Europe and Asia. The Alberta government holding a referendum on the equalization program with the declared intention on gaining leverage for negotiations with the federal government aimed at getting a "fairer deal" has failed to gain substantial public traction, and Alberta's issues should continue to be managed within the country's intergovernmental networks. The second source of tension is Quebec. Although the push for independence is the weakest it has been for over 60 years, nationalism is still very much present and secessionism can be reignited by a perceived slight on the part of the rest of Canada. Quebec's Bill 21, which bars public employees from wearing religious symbols is very popular in the province but has been widely denounced in the rest of the country, with several mayors of major Canadian cities announcing they will support court challenges. Canadian political actors should refrain from such actions, especially considering that the Quebec government has already invoked the so-called notwithstanding constitutional clause that will allow the legislation to survive any court decision.

The importance of climate change as a major policy issue continues to grow, particularly in light of the natural disasters of 2021. While the government has been successful in implementing a national carbon tax requirement and revamping the environmental assessment act, it still is far from meeting its Paris climate accord targets, and even further from the path needed to reach its commitment of zero emissions by 2050. The country's economic dependence on natural resources is no small obstacle to moving forward.

Improving relations with First Nations and other Indigenous groups once again constitutes a fundamental and unresolved challenge for the government. There has been some progress in terms of water infrastructure as well as in the recent \$40 billion commitment to right the past, egregious wrongs of welfare for Indigenous children. However, many of the government's promises remaining unfulfilled. The reconciliation with Indigenous peoples on the basis of a nation-to-nation approach promised by the federal government has involved many symbolic gestures but it has been difficult to operationalize in public policy. A broad array of socioeconomic indicators – income, health, housing – continue to show the deep inequities that persist for Indigenous peoples.

Innovation also poses a key challenge: R&D investment remains low; the transfer of research into commercialization remains problematic; and, in large part, Canada has not turned what is a relatively thriving ecosystem of small and medium-sized enterprises into large global firms. The government needs to undertake a robust assessment of past measures versus impacts and forge a path forward with definitive goals and realistic measures for success.

In the context of the pandemic, the healthcare system is stretched well beyond capacity, with a backlog of surgeries and severe shortages in nursing staff. There is also a need for standards for elder care congregate settings. Meeting challenges on healthcare and elder care will require an injection of funding of at least in the CAD 1 billion range and necessitate flexible approaches that can respect provincial authorities in these fields.

In summary, the look ahead for the Trudeau government's third term contains considerable risk. The government must deal with the frayed relationship with the Western provinces and, as usual, manage Quebec carefully while maintaining the confidence of the House of Commons in a minority situation. Overall, the Liberal government's initiatives have moved Canada toward sustainable governance in many areas – and they certainly have been critical in weathering the pandemic – but there are still large gaps that need to be filled in order to achieve long-term sustainability. In this minority context, the Liberals and some of the opposition parties will have to rise above partisanship in order to pass enduring reforms yielding long-term benefits.

## Party Polarization

Canada is a parliamentary democracy, and its first-past-the-post electoral system has historically generally produced a parliamentary majority for the winning political party, which is further strengthened by strict party discipline.

In these circumstances, the governing party can implement its policies irrespective of polarization and opposition by other parties. Minority governments have been more frequent occurrences in the last two decades, and they tend to not last the usual four-year term. Although coalition governments are not formed in these situations, the governing party still manages to pass legislation with the support of at least one opposition party. At the same time, cross-party cooperation is hindered by one of the strictest party disciplines in the world. Members of parliament almost never vote against party lines, and party leaderships maintain strict control over speech content and committee work (Marland, 2021).

Federal politics has been dominated by the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) (Johnston, 2017), a centrist, “big tent” party (Carty, 2015). The Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) sits on the right. In comparison to the LPC, it is more supportive of the oil industry, less aggressive in its climate change targets, more concerned with deficit and public debt, and opposes stringent gun control. On the left is the New Democratic Party (NDP), which supports more significant social spending and advocates for all minorities, including Indigenous peoples, members of the LGBTQ+ communities, and racialized Canadians. The Bloc québécois (BQ) supports the independence of Québec but, short of this goal, seeks to protect and increase the autonomy of the province. (Score: 9)

Citation:

Alex Marland, *Whipped. Party Discipline in Canada*. UBC Press: 2021.

Richard Johnston, *The Canadian Party System. An Analytical History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

Kenneth Carty, *Big Tent Politics. The Liberal Party's Long Mastery of Canadian Political Life* (Vancouver : UBC Press, 2015).

# Sustainable Policies

## I. Economic Policies

### Economy

Economic Policy  
Score: 8

Prior to March 2020, Canada's economy was stable, with low unemployment and controlled inflation. The onset of the pandemic plunged Canada into the deepest recession since the thirties. At its peak, GDP contracted by 17% and 3 million Canadians lost their employment. Moreover, previously thriving sectors such as travel were essentially shut down.

An extensive array of fiscal and economic policy initiatives were introduced to gird against the worst impacts as lockdowns were introduced to control the spread of the virus. The Bank of Canada brought interest rates to 0.25% by 2020 year end and critical programming undertaken by the federal government included the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. By December 2021, the government was reporting a budgetary deficit of CAD 327.7 billion for 2020-2021. While the full impact of economic measures taken has yet to be assessed, a report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer in May of 2021 estimated the impact of a select subgroup of budgetary measures (CAD \$142.9 billion) would have increased real GDP growth by 0.6 percentage points in 2021. The emergency measures likely also alleviated a sustained unemployment rate above 12% into the end of 2021 (Canada 2020, 38).

By the third quarter of 2021 both the economy and employment began to recover, with GDP growth reaching 5.4%. However, a new wave of the pandemic associated with Omicron has necessitated another round of lockdowns and limited business capacity at the beginning of 2022. The full implications of this for economic growth have yet to be evaluated but the economy is still in a very fragile state, and the federal government has promised continuing support for businesses and workers even though most of the emergency programming measures taken have now ended. The rate of

inflation, especially driven by supply chain shortages and the cost of food, has put further pressure on household incomes. In November of 2021, the Consumer Price Index rose 4.7% over the previous year. Together with the burgeoning deficit, the government will need to steer a careful course of responsible fiscal management and targeted stimulus measures.

Generally speaking, both the federal and provincial governments have implemented market-oriented policies that have enhanced the country's attractiveness to business. However, a continuing key challenge for Canada involves the coordination of regulatory policy across federal and provincial jurisdictions, exacerbated by the presence of interprovincial barriers to trade and labor mobility. Another factor is the country's dependence on natural resources, which account for roughly 20% of GDP. Aside from the challenges posed by decarbonization and the risks associated with the high levels of price volatility in this sector, uncertainties regarding policies and regulations surrounding major projects (e.g., the duty to consult with Indigenous groups) have the potential to stall investment. This factor may be mitigated by the current Liberal government's new Bill C-69 (the Environmental Assessment Act), which is aimed at reducing uncertainty in large-scale projects. The effectiveness of the bill has yet to be demonstrated, however.

A final concern focuses on the need for talent and innovative ability. In the World Economic Forum's 2019 Global Competitiveness Report, Canada continued to receive low rankings with regard to technological readiness, business sophistication and the capacity to innovate. Previous federal budgets in 2017 and 2018 attempted to stimulate innovation through the development of "innovation superclusters," but while focused on scaling and growth, these clusters have not yet made a major impact.

Citation:

Bank of Canada, Annual Report 2020, <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/publications/annual-reports-quarterly-financial-reports/annual-report-2020/>.

Government of Canada, Economic and Fiscal Update 2021, <https://budget.gc.ca/efu-meb/2021/home-accueil-en.html>

Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Impact Assessment of Budget 2021 Measures, 27 May 2021, <https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/blog/news/RP-2122-007-S-impact-assessment-budget-2021-measures-evaluation-incidence-mesures-budget-2021>.

Statistics Canada, "Consumer Price Index, November 2021," 15 December 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211215/dq211215a-eng.htm>

World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2019.



## Labor Markets

Labor Market  
Policy  
Score: 8

The unemployment rate in Canada is primarily driven by the business cycle, which reflects aggregate demand conditions. Labor market policies and programs such as unemployment insurance and training programs are important for income support and the upgrading of skills.

Pre-pandemic, the national labor market continued its strong performance, with Canada's unemployment rate reaching a 40-year low of 5.9% in 2019. However, as economic output tumbled in response to lockdowns and the pandemic, the rate of unemployment surged. Indeed, among OECD countries, Canada along with the United States, experienced some of the largest increases in temporary unemployment. However, with economic recovery and measures such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Response Benefit to help buffer the most severe impacts of the recession, Canada's unemployment rate has now fallen back down, almost to pre-pandemic levels at 6.0%. Among G-7 countries, Canada has been one of the leading countries in jobs recovery (Canada 2021, 20).

Nevertheless, the labor-force participation rates of women, young Canadians, racialized Canadians and Indigenous peoples were especially negatively impacted by the pandemic and rates are lower than they could be, with these groups representing a significant untapped source of potential economic growth. Unemployment rates among Indigenous Canadians, particularly those of Inuit and First Nations members living on reserves, remain very high, suggesting that existing employment-support programs are insufficient. Indeed while non-Indigenous employment has rebounded to levels just slightly below those of 2019, employment rates for Indigenous peoples have remained stuck essentially at 2019 levels. Non-indigenous employment specifically rebounded for men just 0.8 percentage points off 2019 and for women just 0.9 percentage points off 2019 (not seasonally adjusted).

The federal government has recognized both the need to improve the economic environment (for instance, by encouraging businesses to hire new workers) and the need for more effective workplace training, but many of its measures in this area have not had the desired effect. Labor shortages are a growing problem and the situation is particularly acute among nurses and personal care attendants.

### Citation:

Government of Canada, Economic and Fiscal Update 2021, 2021, <https://budget.gc.ca/efu-meb/2021/home-accueil-en.html>.

OECD, Employment Outlook: 2021, 2021, Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD, Employment Outlook: 2020, 2020, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, November 2021, 3 December 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211203/dq211203a-cansim-eng.htm>.

## Taxes

Tax Policy  
Score: 8

Like other Western economies, Canada has seen the share of total income going to the top 1% of earners increase dramatically since 1980. Moreover, the earnings of male workers have stagnated as labor demand has polarized due to changes in technology and trade.

The income tax system is reasonably progressive and continues to be useful in equalizing after-tax incomes for lower income brackets. According to the Conference Board of Canada, there are now almost 200 tax breaks for federal income-taxpayers, resulting in an estimated CAD 100 billion of foregone tax revenue annually. Some experts have argued that the multitude of overlapping tax expenditures benefit high-income individuals at the expense of low-income households. The 2019 budget introduced a \$200,000 cap on stock-option exemptions, a policy move that aligned Canada's treatment of stock options with that of the United States. The 2018 budget introduced the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) as a refundable tax credit intended to supplement the earnings of low-income workers and improve work incentives for low-income Canadians. The move was welcomed by experts, as the CWB has higher benefits and is more easily accessible than its predecessor, the Working Income Tax Benefit, which was widely considered ineffective.

More recently, in 2019, the Multilateral Instrument was introduced through Bill C-82. This instrument, developed by the OECD, is designed to prevent tax-base erosion and profit-shifting by multinational corporations' use of tax havens. In Budget 2021, the government has also committed to introducing a new Digital Services Tax of 3% on revenue from digital services that rely on Canadian users. The tax will apply to large corporations with gross revenues of CAD 750 million or more.

Canada fares well in terms of tax competitiveness. There is no double taxation at the corporate or individual level. Statutory corporate-tax rates at the federal level and within the provinces have been reduced significantly in recent years. The marginal effective tax rate on investment has fallen, and is now the lowest among G-7 countries, and is below the OECD average. Capital taxes have been largely eliminated. The Trudeau administration has also created a new External Advisory Committee on Regulatory Competitiveness in order to reduce the red tape that many businesses claim slows down investment.

## Citation:

Government of Canada, A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience, 2021, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html>.

The Conference Board of Canada, “Reinventing the Canadian Tax System: The Case for Comprehensive Tax Reform.” March 23, 2012.

Department of Finance, Government of Canada, “Introducing the Canada Workers Benefit,” [https://www.fin.gc.ca/n18/docs/18-008\\_5-eng.pdf](https://www.fin.gc.ca/n18/docs/18-008_5-eng.pdf).

## Budgets

Budgetary Policy  
Score: 7

Going into the pandemic, Canada was in a relatively strong fiscal position. While the federal government had incurred a deficit of CAD 14.9 billion in 2018-2019, the federal net debt was 30.8% of GDP, and the country as a whole still registered the lowest net debt-to GDP ratio among G-7 countries. However, as the government rolled out extensive programming to support businesses and workers as they sustained extensive financial losses and loss of employment, federal expenditures soared. Indeed, federal measures accounted for the majority of spending during the pandemic. As a result, the last federal Fiscal and Economic Update of 2021 indicates that the federal deficit for 2020-2021 stood at CAD 327.7 billion and federal debt at 47.5% of GDP.

The OECD in their recent country survey notes that “prudent” fiscal management previous to COVID-19 did provide the country with needed room in undertaking such expansionary measures – for the short term. However, the country also needs to set in place a clear “fiscal roadmap” regarding plans for recovery. This is of course all the more daunting as Canada enters another severe wave of Omicron transmission – and associated economic shutdowns and overload on the health system. Moreover, recent Finance Canada estimates for closing in on the federal deficit by 2026-2027 are premised on economic recovery and a reduction in pandemic spending. Clearly budgetary policy is still in a fragile situation given the uncertainties ahead.

In its most recent 2021 fiscal sustainability report, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) estimates that the federal government could permanently increase spending or reduce taxes by 0.8% of GDP (CAD 18 billion in current dollars) while maintaining net debt at a level of 37.7% of GDP over the long term – a figure which remains higher than those seen before the pandemic. The same cannot be said for long-run provincial fiscal sustainability where, with the exception of Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia, PBO considers current fiscal policy to be unsustainable, primarily due to rising healthcare costs. However, it is worth noting that the rebound in oil and gas prices (and related commodities such as potash) will have a positive impact going forward.

## Citation:

Government of Canada, Economic and Fiscal Update 2021, <https://budget.gc.ca/efu-meb/2021/home-accueil-en.html>

Government of Canada, Investing in the Middle Class: Budget 2019, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/budget-2019-en.pdf>.

OECD, Economic Surveys: Canada 2021, 2021, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Parliamentary Budget Officer, Fiscal Sustainability Report 2021, 30 June 2021, <https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/blog/news/RP-2122-010-S-fiscal-sustainability-report-2021-rapport-viabilite-financiere-2021>.

## Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy  
Score: 7

Canada's economic and policy environment is conducive to innovation and investment in productivity growth. Moreover, the country benefits from a large talent pool; its population has the OECD's highest level of educational attainment with regard to the proportion of the population with a post-secondary education. The number of researchers per capita in Canada is on a par with that of other developed countries.

Despite this, a 2015 report from the federal government's Science, Technology and Innovation Council found that the country continues to lag behind other countries when it comes to key innovation measures such as patent filings and corporate R&D spending. Similarly, a recent report from the Council of Canadian academics warns that although Canada remains a leading global contributor to research, its standing is at risk due to a sustained slide in private and public R&D investment. Indeed, as a share of gross domestic product, R&D expenditures have steadily declined in Canada since 2001, with the ratio now standing at 1.7%, well below the OECD average. The same report indicated that there are significant barriers between innovation and wealth creation in Canada, resulting in a deficit of technology startups growing to scale in Canada and a consequent loss of economic benefits. However, with respect to Higher Education R&D expenditures as a percentage of GDP, Canada has in the past ranked – and continues to rank – above the OECD average.

In 2017, the government announced an innovation and skills agenda, providing CAD 950 million funding in support for “innovation superclusters,” with the goal of encouraging innovation, R&D and economic growth. In addition, a Strategic Innovation Fund with a budget of CAD 1.26 billion over five years was created, with the funding to be allocated to firms across Canada's industrial and technological sectors. This was followed in Budget 2021 with an additional CAD 7.2 billion over seven years to support innovation in strategic

economic sectors and particularly in life sciences and bio-manufacturing given the country's lack of domestic vaccine supply. Nonetheless, the question of how effective government policy is in encouraging R&D investment and productivity gains remains a contentious one, particularly in light of the pandemic and scaling of Canadian firms to global scale remains a challenge.

Council of Canadian Academies, Expert Panel on the State of Science and Technology and Industrial Research and Development in Canada, *Competing in a Global Innovation Economy: The Current State of R&D in Canada*, 2018, Ottawa (ON), [http://new-report.scienceadvice.ca/assets/report/Competing\\_in\\_a\\_Global\\_Innovation\\_Economy\\_FullReport\\_EN.pdf](http://new-report.scienceadvice.ca/assets/report/Competing_in_a_Global_Innovation_Economy_FullReport_EN.pdf).

Government of Canada, *Budget 2021: A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience*, 2021, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html>

Greenspon, Jacob and Erika Rodrigues (2017) "Are Trends in Patenting Reflective of Innovative Activity in Canada?" CSLS Research Report 2017-01, January <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2017-01.pdf>.

Science, Technology and Innovation Council, *Canada's Innovation Challenges and Opportunities, State of the Nation: 2014, 2015*, [http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/vwapj/STIC\\_1500\\_SON\\_Report\\_e\\_proof4.pdf/\\$FILE/STIC\\_1500\\_SON\\_Report\\_e\\_proof4.pdf](http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/vwapj/STIC_1500_SON_Report_e_proof4.pdf/$FILE/STIC_1500_SON_Report_e_proof4.pdf).

### Global Financial System

Stabilizing  
Global Financial  
System  
Score: 8

The Canadian government, through various departments and agencies, contributes actively to the effective regulation and supervision of the international financial architecture. The Bank of Canada has been particularly prominent in the international arena, with Mark Carney, the former Governor of the Bank of Canada previously serving as the Governor of the Bank of England as well as former chair of the G-20 Financial Stability Board (FSB). As well, the current Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, has previously chaired the FSB's Standing Committee on Standards Implementation. The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (OSFI) has also been very active internationally.

Citation:  
Eric Helleiner, *The Financial Stability Board and International Standards*, The Centre for International Governance Innovation, G20 Papers, No. 1, June 2010, [https://www.cigionline.org/static/documents/g20\\_no\\_1\\_2.pdf](https://www.cigionline.org/static/documents/g20_no_1_2.pdf)

## II. Social Policies

### Education

Education Policy  
Score: 9

Education quality in Canada is high. The country has a number of world-class universities and the average quality of its universities is high. Canadian teachers are well-paid by global standards. The most recent Program for

International Student Assessment (PISA) report, released in December 2019 and covering results for 2018 results, showed that Canadian students score well above the OECD average in reading (fourth place among 77 countries), science (sixth place) and mathematics (10th place). Research has emphasized how these strong results have come without the existence of a federal ministry of education (Wallner, 2014).

Equity in access to education is impressive. A very high proportion of Canada’s population has some post-secondary education, thanks in part to the extensive development of community colleges. There are many educational second chances for Canadian youth. The high school completion rate is also high. Socioeconomic background represents a much lower barrier to post-secondary education in Canada than in most other countries.

Education is under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Allocated resources are reasonable and, in general, efficiently used. The federal government contributes grant money to post-secondary students with financial need. It also offers grants for education through a Registered Education Savings Plan if parents also contribute. Moreover, there exists federal and provincial loans programs.

Despite the strengths of the Canadian education system, a major challenge is the gap in educational attainment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Citation:  
Jennifer Wallner, Learning to School. Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

**Social Inclusion**

Social Inclusion  
Policy  
Score: 8

Most social policies, such as income transfers (e.g., child benefits, pensions) and educational policies, support societal inclusion and ensure equal opportunities. A recent CSLS study (Hillel, 2020) has found that Canadians living in poverty (using the Market Basket Measure) declined from 15.6% in 2006 to 8.7% in 2018, with most of this being attributed to offsets after taxes such as with the federal Canada Child Benefit.

However, for certain groups, notably recent immigrants and Indigenous Canadians, social policy has not prevented social exclusion. For immigrants, social disparities tend to diminish with the second generation, but persistent gaps remain for the Indigenous population. Despite the Trudeau government’s promises to improve economic outcomes for Indigenous peoples, progress has

proved elusive. Indigenous children are more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous children to live in poverty. Using figures from the 2016 census, a Canadian Press review found that four out of every five Aboriginal reserves have median incomes that fall below the poverty line.

In 2018, the federal government released its first-ever poverty reduction strategy, which stressed the importance of social inclusion and established a target for poverty reduction. Passed into law in 2019, the Poverty Reduction Act established these targets, Canada's official poverty line and an advisory council on this issue. As reported by the update on the poverty strategy released in 2019, the country was ahead of schedule in reaching its target of a 20% reduction in poverty. However, this lower poverty rate excludes Indigenous peoples living on reserves, where child poverty rates are around 51%. Moreover, while the current rate of poverty as measured by Statistics Canada fell to 10.1% in 2019, the impact of the pandemic has yet to be assessed.

Citation:

David Macdonald and Daniel Wilson (2016), Shameful Neglect: Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada, Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, available from <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/shameful-neglect>.

Statistics Canada (2013), Education in Canada: Attainment, Field of Study and Location of Study, National Household Survey 2011 Analytical document 99-012-X

Hillel, Inez (2020) "Holes in the Social Safety Net: Poverty, Inequality and Social Assistance in Canada," CSLS Research Report 2020-06, August, (Ottawa: Centre for the Study of Living Standards), <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2020-06.pdf>

Employment and Social Development Canada (2018) "Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy," <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

Employment and Social Development Canada (2019) Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy: An Update," <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/results/poverty-reduction.html>.

Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey, 23 March 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/210323/dq210323a-eng.pdf?st=xvtiH17L>

## Health

Health Policy  
Score: 8

As has been witnessed globally, health policy in Canada has also been very heavily impacted by the pandemic. While healthcare, like educational policy, is primarily the responsibility of the individual provinces, all levels of government have been focused in their efforts, and expenditures, on dealing with the health crisis. Initially health policy pivoted to focus on procurement of personal protective equipment and, while Canada was slow in acquiring vaccines, by December 2020, Canada had begun to complete major acquisitions with provinces and territories delivering doses into arms.

In Canada, vaccine takeup has generally proven strong, with concerted education campaigns and regular briefings by respective medical health officers, often on a daily basis. Mask mandates and capacity limits both for outdoor and indoor activities have been recurring features across the country as COVID-19 waves have peaked and waned, with provincial and territorial jurisdictions establishing their own protocols. The federal government has also locked down borders during the pandemic and has followed with mask mandates for federally-regulated activities, including travel. As a result, vaccine takeup has been quite strong; as of 28 December 2021, 77.38 persons were fully vaccinated per 100 population.

Despite progress on the vaccine front, the impacts on the healthcare system have been marked. Even before the pandemic the most glaring problem with the Canadian system was timely access to care. In a 2017 study by the Commonwealth Fund, Canada ranked last for providing timely access to care out of 11 high-income countries. As hospitals and healthcare units pivoted to deal with COVID-19, redirecting resources to emergency and intensive care, these wait times and access issues became even more acute. The Canadian Institute for Health Information reported that almost 560,000 fewer surgeries were performed between March 2020 to June 2021, in comparison with 2019. The Canadian Medical Association has championed the need for change, highlighting the immense challenges with which the Canadian healthcare system is “struggling” and calling for an infusion of CAD 1.3 billion in funding on the part of the federal government.

The pandemic also revealed extremely inadequate measures being taken in long-term care homes; in the first wave of the pandemic, 80% of fatalities were in long-term care facilities (OECD 2021). Seniors groups have called for more stringent regulations regarding long-term care but this issue continues to be one of tension between the federal government and the provinces.

With respect to access, income is not a barrier to treatment, with care freely provided for almost the entire population. However, since dental care, eye care and drugs prescribed for use outside of hospitals are excluded from general coverage, not all income groups have equal access to these types of healthcare services. In the 2019 election campaign, Trudeau pledged to implement a national pharmacare program, although the administration has not made it clear how it would fund such a program.

A 2021 Commonwealth Fund study found that Canada’s healthcare system outperforms the United States but trails behind that of comparable countries (e.g., Norway, the Netherlands, Australia). The Commonwealth Fund report



ranked Canada second to last overall on a comparative score card of 11 healthcare systems.

Citation:

Canadian Institute for Health Information, "Wait Times for Priority Procedures in Canada," 2021, June 2021, <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/wait-times-chartbook-priority-procedures-in-canada-2016-2020-en.pdf>.

Canadian Medical Association/Deloitte, "A Struggling System: Understanding the Health Care Impacts of the Pandemic," November 2021, <https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/health-advocacy/Deloitte-report-nov2021-EN.pdf>.

Eric C. Schneider et al., Commonwealth Fund, *Mirror, Mirror* 2017, 14 July 2017, <https://interactives.commonwealthfund.org/2017/july/mirror-mirror/>.

Eric C. Schneider et al., Commonwealth Fund, *Mirror, Mirror 2021: Reflecting Poorly*, 4 August 2021, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2021/aug/mirror-mirror-2021-reflecting-poorly>

OECD Economic Surveys: Canada 2021, 2021. Paris: OECD Publishing.

World Health Organization, <https://covid19.who.int/table>.

## Families

Family Policy  
Score: 8

The labor-force participation rate for women with children all under six years of age in Canada is high by international standards. According to Statistics Canada, the number of two-income families nearly doubled over the past decades: in 2015, 69% of couples with a child under 16 years of age have two working parents. In recent years, one key policy has been the increase in the child tax credit, which has reduced the barriers associated with the so-called welfare wall. In the past, when single parents, mostly women, left welfare, they lost all income benefits for their children. With the integration of the welfare system with the universal, income-tested child benefits, there is now less disincentive to leave welfare and enter the labor market. In 2016, the federal government significantly increased the level of child benefits and in 2017 indexed benefits to inflation.

Previously, however, Canada did not have a universal childcare system, although some provinces had taken steps to implement their own, such as Nova Scotia's pre-primary education system and most notably Quebec's CAD \$7 per day daycare scheme. However, throughout the summer and fall of 2021, the government began moving toward universal childcare, negotiating and signing Early Learning and Childcare agreements with most of the provinces. The goal is to make childcare more affordable, eventually reducing the cost of regulated care to \$10 a day by 2025-2026 and reducing costs to parents by 50% in the interim. At the time of writing, all but Ontario had

signed on to the agreements. In the case of Québec which already has a full-fledged care system in place funding will be used to enhance their system. Budget 2021 has dedicated \$29.8 billion to the new initiative, to be allocated over the next five years.

This initiative is significant, given the government’s commitment to gender equity and coming on the heels of the pandemic when many women had to shoulder both work and childcare in the home environment. Moreover, the average net cost of childcare in Canada is among the OECD’s highest, both as a share of the average wage and as a share of the average family income.

Citation:

Government of Canada, A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience: Budget 2021, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html>.

CTV News, “What’s the status of Ottawa’s childcare deal with the provinces and territories?” 9 November 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/what-s-the-status-of-ottawa-s-child-care-deal-with-the-provinces-and-territories-1.5658879>.

OECD Family database, [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/data](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/data) base.

## Pensions

Pension Policy  
Score: 8

The basic components of Canada’s public pension retirement-income system are the Old Age Security (OAS) demogrant, the income-tested Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the contribution-fed, earnings-based Canada/Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP). Other tiers of the pension system include employer pension plans (both defined-benefit and defined-contribution plans) and government incentive programs for individual saving such as Registered Retirement Saving Plan (RRSPs) and Tax-Free Saving Accounts (TFSAAs).

The Canadian pension system seems to be relatively effective as a tool to reduce poverty among the elderly. For individuals over 70 years of age in the lowest quintile of the earnings distribution, the proportion of working income “replaced” by retirement income is nearly 100%. Since 1995, elderly incomes at the bottom have been growing, but not as quickly as the incomes of the rest of the population. Using Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Cutoff (LICO) measure of poverty, an absolute definition, the poverty rate for people 65 and over was 4.7% in 2016, one of the lowest rates ever recorded in the history of the series. In contrast, Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Measure (LIM), a relative poverty definition, senior poverty rates have been on an upward trend over recent years, increasing from a low of 3.9% in 1995 to 14.2% in 2016. OAS and GIS were temporarily boosted during the pandemic. The 2021 federal budget announced a 10% increase in old-age security benefits once

recipients turn 75, which is estimated to reduce poverty in this age group by 14.5%.

Intergenerational equity is not a major concern for the Canadian pension system as there is a close relationship between contributions and benefits on an individual basis. With the recent benefits and contribution expansion, the CPP/QPP is projected to replace only a third of the average wage up to a ceiling that will reach CAD 82,700 in 2025. Thus, middle- and upper-income workers with no employer pension plan or private savings may not be able to replace a sufficient proportion of their pre-retirement earnings. In the private sector, this issue affects three in four workers.

The CPP is considered to be actuarially sound and fiscally sustainable at its current rate and benefit structure, due to large increases in contribution rates implemented in the late 1990s and late 2010s and early 2020s. The fiscal sustainability of the OAS/GIS is tied to the sustainability of the federal government's overall fiscal balance, and is fostered by the indexation of benefits to the CPI rather than to nominal wage increases.

Citation:

Milligan, K. and T. Schirle, Simulated Replacements Rates for CPP Reform Options, School of Public Policy Research Paper, Volume 7(7), University of Calgary, 2014.

Income Security Advocacy Center, "Eligible seniors set to receive increases in Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement," 14 July 2021, <http://incomesecurity.org/public-education/eligible-seniors-set-to-receive-increases-in-old-age-security-and-guaranteed-income-supplement/>

## Integration

Integration Policy  
Score: 9

Pre-pandemic, Canada was receiving over 300,000 immigrants per year and had one of the highest annual immigration-to-population ratios in the world. However, the pandemic has had major impacts and, by December 2020, the Conference Board of Canada was reporting that permanent resident admissions had declined by 56%.

In large part, cultural, education and social policies, including language training and orientation courses, do support the integration of immigrants. Canada also allows immigrants to become citizens after three years of residency, one of the shortest residency requirements in the world. The high educational attainment of immigrants, the highest in the world with around half of immigrants having university educations, also facilitates integration.

Nevertheless, these policies do have weaknesses, as seen by the relatively poor labor market performance of recent immigrants and immigrants' high rate of

return to their countries of origin. A CSLS study (Wong, 2020) found that, in 2019, the hourly wage of immigrants to Canada with less than five years of residence averaged just 82% of the hourly wage of people born in Canada. However, this was up from 78% in 2010, so progress is being made. The relative wage for university educated recent immigrants was even worse, 70% in 2018, but up from 65% in 2010. Immigrants' labor market integration is impeded by a number of factors, including difficulties in having their professional credentials recognized by Canadian authorities, the concentration of immigrants in a small number of major cities (e.g., Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal) and language barriers. Moreover, the new decline in immigration has exacerbated geographic settlement patterns and there is a need for greater supports to new immigrants in areas of the country where settlement has fallen behind.

In spite of these challenges, a study by the CSLS over the 2006-2019 period did find that employment rates for new and recent immigrants had improved.

Citation:

Kimberly Wong, The Improved Labour Market Performance of New Immigrants to Canada, 2006-2019, CSLS Research Report 2020-03, June 2020, <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2020-02.pdf>.

The Conference Board of Canada, Counting on Immigration: Measuring the Pandemic's Effect and Building Back Stronger, May 2021, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=11163>.

### Safe Living

Internal Security  
Policy  
Score: 8

Canada's internal security policy has been quite effective in protecting citizens against security risks. Canada has experienced no terror attacks mounted from outside the country, which suggests that the Canadian intelligence services are doing excellent work. Two separate attacks by native Canadians in 2014, resulting in the deaths of two soldiers, prompted the previous government to introduce a number of bills to bolster security and the power of agencies. These laws increased the powers of Canada's spy agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), to share information and operate internationally, criminalized the promotion of terrorism, and provided the federal police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with new preventative arrest powers. The Liberal government has implemented a new bill designed to roll back some of the powers assumed by the previous government. Bill C-59, which removed some of the liberties accorded to the CSIS and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE; the country's signals-intelligence organization) in the past, also established new review bodies designed to increase security-service accountability.

Crime rates in Canada are low from an international perspective and continue to fall. Canadians in general have a high degree of confidence and trust in the

police. However, this is not true to the same extent within the Indigenous community. A report released by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 2014 stated that between 1980 and 2013, 1,181 Indigenous women were reported murdered or missing. The UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Canada previously expressed concerns about violence against Indigenous women and girls and Canada's perceived failure to address the problem. The government has launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to gather evidence and propose recommendations on the issue. The inquiry has faced substantial criticism over the past year, with several key members stepping down and victims' families calling for a complete restructuring of the program.

Citation:

UN Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review: Canada, 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/CASession16.aspx>.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview, 2014, <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-national-operational-overview>.

Forcese Craig and Kent Roach, "A Report Card on the National Security Bill" 22 June 2017, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2017/a-report-card-on-the-national-security-bill/>.

### Global Inequalities

Global Social  
Policy  
Score: 7

Canada's government has a long history of supporting international efforts to promote socioeconomic opportunities in developing countries, and has shown leadership on critical issues such as nutrition and child health. In 2016, the federal government began a review of its existing aid policies, and has now reoriented the majority of international assistance to creating equal opportunities for women and girls in the world's poorest countries, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite this reorientation, Canada's share of official development assistance had been declining in recent years and the OECD has critiqued the country for the very modest nature of its development assistance, relative to its economic growth. Even today, its contributions are significantly off the UN target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI), although by 2020 Canada's Official Development Assistance had experienced a small upswing, standing at 0.31% of the GNI. Moreover, although the government initially sustained criticism for acquiring vaccines from the Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) for domestic use, the country has now made a commitment to donate 200 million vaccines to COVAX.

The North-South Institute study makes the case that Canada's focus on improving aid effectiveness and accountability is insufficient as an

overarching guide to promoting development. This is because the focus on aid effectiveness captures only a small part of Canada’s engagement with the developing world. A broader vision that includes aid and non-aid policies is needed in order for Canada to improve the coherence of its development policy and be an effective actor in the international development sphere.

Citation:

Anni-Clau dine Bulles and Sghannon Kindornay, “Beyond Aid: A Plan for Canadian International Cooperation” North-South Institute, May 2013, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/BuellesKindornay.2013.CNDPolicyCoherenceEN.pdf>

OECD, “Canada needs to increase foreign aid flows in line with its renewed engagement,” 14 September 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/canada/canada-needs-to-increase-foreign-aid-flows-in-line-with-its-renewed-engagement.htm>.

OECD, “Canada,” Development Co-operation Profiles, 2021, Paris: OECD Publishing <https://doi.org/10.1787/2dcf1367-en>.

OECD, “Gender equality and women’s rights in the post-2015 agenda: A foundation for sustainable development,” <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/POST-2015%20Gender.pdf>.

### III. Environmental Policies

#### Environment

Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 7

Climate change has come to the forefront of the Liberal government’s agenda, with widespread fires and flooding in Canada during the summer and fall of 2021 and with coastal regions bearing the brunt of these impacts. Moreover, a recent expert report has indicated that Canada faces increasing risks from climate change with impacts for Indigenous and Northern communities, human health, physical infrastructure, ecosystems and fisheries (CCA 2019).

On the whole, since first taking office in 2015, the Liberal government’s environmental record has been mixed. On climate change, in 2016, the government ratified the Paris Agreement and has since established a new national target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. It has also set a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050. The Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change represents a collaborative effort to ensure that the target is met through carbon pricing, investments in energy efficiency and renewable-energy strategies. Renewable-energy policy is largely the responsibility of the provinces, and several provinces have already made significant efforts to address climate change. Successive federal budgets have also provided

funding for clean technologies with clean tech an important new hub for investment and innovation. More recently, Canada has signed on to the Glasgow Climate Pact which reaffirmed the commitment of the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and which now has also included a commitment to begin “phasing out” coal.

Despite these efforts, however, a recent report by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has found that emissions have continued to increase and indeed, since 1990, have grown by 20%. Moreover, following investor uncertainty, the government nationalized the highly controversial Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion at a cost of CAD 4.5 billion, which raised serious questions about Trudeau’s commitment to fighting climate change and protecting Indigenous rights. The government has finished a second round of consultations and reapproved the project (following a court decision to allow for further consultation), with construction now well underway. The issue continues to draw criticism from British Columbia and Indigenous communities.

With respect to other issues, 2019 saw the passage of bills C-48, a moratorium on large oil tankers accessing ports on British Columbia’s north coast, and C-55, which establishes a network of protected marine areas and prohibits certain activities in these areas. These actions are signs of an effort to improve the country’s marine-resources conservation. Additionally, the federal government has made significant investment to mitigate biodiversity loss. The government has also passed legislation to impose a carbon tax in provinces without a comparable program. Experts agree that this carbon tax is too low to achieve Canada’s commitments. At the same time, the government continues to face fierce opposition to the tax from some provinces. Attempts to challenge the law in court have failed with the Supreme Court upholding the legislation.

Overall, the government has tried to steer a course through highly polarized positions in the country on climate change and the environment.

Council of Canadian Academies. 2019. Canada’s Top Climate Change Risks: The Expert Panel on Climate Change Risks and Adaptation Potential, <https://cca-reports.ca/reports/prioritizing-climate-change-risks/>.

Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada: Report 5, Lessons Learned from Canada’s Record on Climate Change, 2021, [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_cesd\\_202111\\_05\\_e\\_43898.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_202111_05_e_43898.html).

Tasker, John Paul. “Trudeau cabinet approves Trans-Mountain, Line 3 pipelines, rejects Northern Gateway.” CBC, November 29, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/federal-cabinet-trudeau-pipeline-decisions-1.3872828>

Harris, Kathleen. “Liberals to buy Trans-Mountain pipeline for \$4.5B to ensure expansion is built.” CBC, May 29, 2018. Accessed on November 2, 2018 at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberals-trans-mountain-pipeline-kinder-morgan-1.4681911>.

Global  
Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 7

### Global Environmental Protection

The government of Canada in principle supports the design and advancement of global environmental-protection regimes. In the past, Canada's approach to environmental policy has, to a large degree, followed that of the United States, given the close economic relations between the two countries. Over the duration of its mandate, the Liberal government has generally focused on domestic policy.

However, at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), Canada participated with Germany and Britain in releasing the Climate Finance Delivery Plan whose purpose is to deliver USD 100 billion in finance to developing countries in combating climate change. Canada has also committed to doubling its contribution to international climate finance to \$5.3 billion over the next five years.

The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), which was signed in November 2018 by Canada, the United States and Mexico as a replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), includes a chapter on environmental cooperation with the stated aim to "promote mutually supportive trade and environmental policies and practices." Although experts criticized CUSMA as being weak on environmental protection, in particular, because it does not directly address climate change, the new agreement no longer includes NAFTA's investor-state dispute settlement ("ISDS") system, which was often used to challenge Canadian environmental decision-making, and which many commentators believed had a chilling effect on environmental regulation in Canada.

Citation:  
Government of Canada. "Canada's international climate finance," 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/canada-international-action/climate-finance.html>.

Michael Connell, Canada: USMCA Trade Deal And The Environment, October 2018, Siskinds LLP. Retrieved Nov 12 2019 at <http://www.mondaq.com/canada/x/748452/Environmental+Law/USMCA+Trade+Deal+and+the+Environment>.



# Robust Democracy

## Electoral Processes

Candidacy  
Procedures  
Score: 10

The right to be a candidate in a federal election is laid down in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (section 3), with the associated procedures and responsibilities specified in the Canada Elections Act. There are virtually no restrictions on becoming a candidate for election. Almost all Canadian citizens 18 years old or over can stand as candidates for federal elections. Exceptions include members of provincial or territorial legislatures, certain judges, election officers, people who were candidates in a previous election but who did not conform to the expense-reporting rules, and persons imprisoned in a correctional institution. There is no cost to being a candidate in a federal election. A CAD 1,000 deposit is required, but this is reimbursed if the candidate's official agent submits the electoral campaign return after the election within the prescribed time. Administrative procedures are not onerous (a nomination form is required containing signatures by either 50 or 100 people residing in the constituency in which the candidate wants to run, with the number depending on the electoral district's population).

Media Access  
Score: 8

While some national media outlets sometimes demonstrate political orientations, in general there is fair and balanced coverage of election campaigns and parties. Under sections 335, 339 and 343 of the Canada Elections Act, every broadcaster in Canada is required to make a minimum of 390 minutes of airtime during each federal general election available for purchase by registered political parties. The allocation of airtime among the parties is usually based on a formula that takes into account factors such as the party's percentage of seats in the House of Commons and its percentage of the popular vote in the last general election. The Canadian system is primarily one of paid political advertising; that is, any broadcasting time used before an election has to be paid for. While CBC/Radio-Canada does provide a small amount of free airtime to federal and provincial parties, this does not represent a significant share of political advertising. However, whether or not this situation translates into unequal access is unclear, as campaign spending regulations impose de facto limits on how much parties can actually spend on televised advertising time.

The Canada Elections Act (S.C. 2000,c.9, s.350 (1)-(2)) restricts the amount any “third party” or outside group can spend on political advertising and activities during a normal-length political campaign to CAD 350,000 with no more than CAD 3,000 being spent in any one electoral district. The Act (s. 349.1(1)-(2)) also imposes limits on pre-election spending. In the three-month period before the official start of the campaign period, non-party entities can spend no more than CAD 700,000.

Citation:

Canada Elections Act, S.C. 2000, c.9, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/E-2.01.pdf>

Voting and  
Registration  
Rights  
Score: 9

All Canadian citizens 18 years and over have the right to vote. Permanent residents do not have the right to vote at any level of government. In January 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canadians living abroad for any length of time can continue to vote in federal elections. Canadian citizens 18 years and over must be registered in order to vote. Canada has a system of universal voter registration; the government is in charge of registering its citizens to vote as a means of protecting their constitutional right (this stands in contrast with the United States’ system of citizen-initiated opt-in registration). This is generally done through checking a box on the tax return form but can also be done online or by mail. Additionally, Canada allows for in-person registration after an election is called. Procedures for voting are not onerous. Adequate opportunity for casting an advance ballot is provided. There are four days of advance polling, ending the week before election day. Typically reserved for Canadians living abroad and Canadians with disabilities, voting by mail was extended to all Canadians for the 2021 federal elections held during the pandemic, after they applied online, by phone, or in person.

The Harper Conservative government, through the Fair Elections Act (2014), made some highly controversial changes to Canada’s election laws. These changes, which were seen by many as making it harder for disadvantaged Canadians to vote, were repealed by the subsequent Liberal government through the Elections Modernization Act (2019). This legislation allows voter information cards to be recognized as an acceptable form of identification, and it restores the rights of Canadians living abroad to vote no matter how long they have lived outside the country.

Party Financing  
Score: 8

The Canada Elections Act requires registered parties or electoral-district associations to issue income tax receipts for contributions, and to make public reports on the state of their finances. Furthermore, the act requires registered parties to report and make public all contributions of more than CAD 20. Elections Canada provides access to the full database online for public use.

Corporations, trade unions, associations and groups are prohibited from contributing to political parties. Only individuals are allowed to contribute. The amount that candidates and leadership contestants may contribute to their own campaigns is CAD 5,000 and CAD 25,000, respectively. Individuals receive generous tax credits for political donations. Annual contributions to registered parties, registered associations, electoral candidates, and nomination and leadership contestants are capped at a relatively modest amount of CAD 1,550. However, transparency in political financing is still seen as a problem. Public debate over transparency recently reignited after it was revealed in 2016 that the prime minister and other senior ministers were raising millions of dollars at private “cash-for-access” fundraisers, giving donors secretive cabinet access. The 2018 Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing) stipulates that party fundraisers must be advertised in advance, conducted in a public place, and be open to the media. Provincial practices and rules regarding political donations vary widely (Brock and Jansen, 2015). Fixed contribution limits, for example, range from only CAD 100 per year in Quebec to CAD 6,000 per year in New Brunswick. Yet, in other provinces like Saskatchewan, any individual, corporation, union or special interest group can make a political contribution of any size to a provincial political party.

In addition to individual donations, political parties are funded by the government. Each registered federal political party that received at least 2% of all valid votes in the last general election, or at least 5% of the valid votes in the electoral districts in which it has a candidate, is reimbursed 50% of its national campaign expenses and further “election rebates” for riding-specific expenses.

Citation:

David M. Brock and Harold J. Jansen, “Raising, Spending, and Regulating Party Finances in the Provinces,” *Canadian Political Science Review*, vol. 9, no.1, 2015, 55-74.

Popular Decision-  
Making  
Score: 7

On the federal level, there are no opportunities for Canadians to make binding decisions on matters of importance to them through citizens-initiated referendums. Under the Canadian system, citizens do not have the opportunity to take binding decisions on issues of importance to them or vote on issues through a legally binding measure. There are no legally binding referendums. All referendums in Canada require legislation.

The same is true in the provinces. In 2021, a Citizen Initiative Act was being debated by the Alberta legislature. “Should the Citizen Initiative Act pass, prodding the government to create a new law or amend an existing one, or make a provincial policy change, would require a voter to gather written signatures within 90 days from 10% of the province’s electors – about 280,000 people” (French, 2021).

## Citation:

Janet French. 2021. "Proposed law could see Alberta voters petition government for change," CBC News, March 16. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/proposed-law-could-see-alberta-voters-petition-governments-for-changes-1.5952191>

**Access to Information**

Media Freedom  
Score: 9

The only publicly owned media organization in Canada at the national level is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)/Société Radio-Canada (SRC), which runs radio and television stations. CBC/SRC is a Crown corporation operating at arm's-length from the federal government as specified in the 1991 Broadcasting Act. Its programming features a variety of political views. Of course, privately owned media organizations can also take any political position they wish. All media is regulated by an independent body, the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC), without overt political influence.

Media Pluralism  
Score: 6

Media ownership in Canada is concentrated, with a small number of Canadian-owned and Canadian-controlled media conglomerates (Bell, Rogers, Quebecor) dominating the mainstream print and electronic media. There is a particularly strong media concentration in some parts of the country (e.g., the Irving newspapers in New Brunswick). This trend has accelerated with the shutdown of several dozen local newspapers following a deal between two national newspaper corporations, Torstar and Postmedia Group, in 2017.

A case can be made that the lack of competition in the industry has led to a lack of diversity in views and positions. For example, mainstream media outlets rarely support social-democratic political parties. The mainstream print media generally express a centrist to center-right political orientation but some (such as the Globe and Mail and La Presse) make an effort to bring in left-wing perspectives in order to provide a balanced coverage of issues. Of course, the influence of mainstream newspapers has waned considerably in the last decade or so in favor of online sources of information and social media, where Canadians can find a great diversity of opinions and political perspectives. The public media (television and radio) generally presents a good diversity of political opinions and analysis.

Access to  
Government  
Information  
Score: 7

Access to official information in Canada has been regulated by the 35-year-old Access to Information Act, which was generally regarded as antiquated. In response, the Trudeau government passed Bill C-59 in June 2019, a measure intended to reform the law and bring it into the 21st century. The new legislation has widely been seen as an improvement. Importantly, it expands the power of the Information Commissioner, giving this entity the authority to order institutions to release records at the end of an investigation when a complaint is deemed to be "well-founded." When appropriate, the Information

Commissioner will also be able to issue publication orders for new complaints that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through informal resolution mechanisms, as well as publish the results of investigations. Furthermore, institutions may now ask the Information Commissioner for approval to decline access requests that are vexatious, made in bad faith or otherwise represent an abuse of the right of access.

The Commissioner had previously expressed a number of concerns about the bill, which were subsequently resolved in committee before the measure was passed into law. One caveat is that the right to information does not apply to the Prime Minister's Office or other ministerial offices. Government institutions can also decline a request if it concerns a large number of records, is deemed to be made in "bad faith" or would interfere with government operations.

As is the case elsewhere, access to information in Canada is often impeded by bureaucratic procedures and delays. The 2017 Freedom of Information Audit by News Media Canada awarded the system a grade of F for the disclosure of information, stating that the process for requesting and accessing government documents is slow and inefficient, and that very few requests are granted in a timely manner. It remains to be seen whether these realities will change under the new act.

News Media Canada (2017) 2017 Freedom of Information Audit, posted at <https://nmc-mic.ca/public-affairs/freedom-of-information/2017-freedom-information-audit/>

Office of the Information Commissioner, Annual Report, 2018-2019, posted at <https://www.oic-ci.gc.ca/ar-ra/2018/Home.html>

### Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights  
Score: 9

The state shows a high degree of respect for civil rights in Canada, and courts offer strong rights protection as they consider the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The COVID-19 pandemic raised several rights issues as provincial governments made face coverings compulsory in public places, restricted mobility (interprovincial but also in some instances intra-provincial), implemented a curfew (in Québec only), and implemented a so-called vaccine passport whereby only citizens having had two valid doses of a vaccine against COVID-19 could eat in restaurants, work out in a gym, go to a movie theater, etc... The federal government closed the border for much non-essential international travel and mandated quarantines for Canadians coming back into the country as well as visitors. The federal government chose not to invoke emergency powers to tackle the pandemic, boosting instead the frequency of intergovernmental meetings with the provinces (Lecours et al., 2020). Most of

these measures enjoyed broad support, but a vocal minority saw in the measures an unreasonable infringement upon their rights. A 2020 Royal Society of Canada briefing on rights and the pandemic makes the point that rights have limits but that governments must have a reasoned justification for infringement as they declare public health measures (p.5). Canada's Human Rights Commissions (present at the federal level, in all ten provinces, and in two territories) played a strong rights advocacy role during the pandemic (De Silva, 2020).

Colleen Flood, Vanessa MacDonnell, Bryan Thomas and Kumanan Wilson, *Reconciling Civil Liberties and Public Health*

in the Response to COVID-19. Royal Society of Canada, 2020. [https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/CL%20PB\\_EN.pdf](https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/CL%20PB_EN.pdf)

André Lecours, Daniel Béland, Nikola Brassard-Dion, Trevor Tombe and Jennifer Wallner, "The Covid-19 Crisis and Canadian Federalism," Ottawa: Forum of Federations and Center on Governance of the University of Ottawa, occasional paper 48, 2020. <http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/OPS48.pdf>

Emmett Macfarlane, "Public Policy and Constitutional Rights in Times of Crisis," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no.2, 2020, 299-303.

Nicole Da Silva, "A Human Rights Approach to Emergency Response? The Advocacy of Canada's Human Rights Commissions during the COVID-19 Crisis," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no.2, 2020, 265-271.

Political Liberties  
Score: 9

The state and the courts generally show a high degree of respect of, and protection for, political liberties in Canada. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a guarantee of "fundamental freedoms" in its section 2, thereby giving courts justiciable norms for the protection of political liberties. Citizens have ample room to express their political opinions in a variety of venues and to participate in politics through extra-parliamentary means such as lobbying and demonstrating in addition to having the right to vote in, and stand for, elections.

Non-discrimination  
Score: 8

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted in 1982, with the aim of preventing discrimination based on gender, physical or mental disability, ethnic or national origin or religion (section 15). Citizens believing they are victims of discrimination from government legislation have, often successfully, challenged such legislation in court based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Courts have stated that Canadians were also protected against discrimination linked to sexual orientation by section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The federal government has established policies such as employment equity and pay equity to protect and promote the rights of disadvantaged groups (often called equity groups) such as women, ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities. There also exists a federal Court Challenge Program that provides funding for citizens seeking to raise in court rights issues of national significance.

As so often, the experiences of Canada's Indigenous population pose the greatest concern. Reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples (2014), the UN Human Rights Committee (2015) and Human Rights Watch (2018) found that the rights of Indigenous peoples were consistently violated, including unresolved treaty rights, violence against Indigenous women and girls, disproportionately high rates of incarceration, and inadequate access to clean and safe drinking water.

One piece of legislation that has been the subject of much political discussion around the issue of discrimination is Québec’s Bill 21 (Loi sur la Laïcité de l’État), which forbids public sector employees from wearing religious symbols while at work. This legislation is being challenged in court. The federal Liberal government has stated it does not agree with Bill 21 but it has not clearly said if and how it would formally oppose it if the case ends up being heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. This legislation is hugely popular in Québec and the Québec government has already invoked article 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the so-called notwithstanding clause) that allows a parliament to adopt a law deemed by courts to be incompatible with sections 2 or 7-15 of the Charter.

UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya (2014), posted at [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/SR/A.HRC.27.52.Add.2-MissionCanada\\_AUV.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/SR/A.HRC.27.52.Add.2-MissionCanada_AUV.pdf)

**Rule of Law**

Legal Certainty  
Score: 8

Canada’s government and administration rarely make unpredictable decisions. Executive action is generally guided and bounded by legislation. Of course, the government can be expected to be challenged in court if its executive actions are not consistent with the law, which provides an incentive to comply. In a minority government situation, the House of Commons can also make the government fall if it feels it has not authorized a policy or course of action.

Judicial Review  
Score: 9

The scope of judicial review was greatly expanded with the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, which constitutionally entrenched individual rights and freedoms. Today, the courts in Canada, both federal and provincial, pursue their reasoning free from the influence of governments, powerful groups or individuals. The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) is the country’s final court of appeal. The structure and proceedings of the SCC are grounded in the Supreme Court Act, last amended in 2019.

Appointment of Justices  
Score: 6

The current process for appointing Supreme Court of Canada judges has been in place since 2016. Qualified candidates apply through the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs. An independent Advisory Board, composed of three members appointed by the Minister of Justice and four members appointed by legal organizations, evaluates the applications and submits a short-list of the best candidates to the prime minister. The Advisory Board also produces a public report on how it chose the names on the short-

list. The prime minister then selects a nominee. The Minister of Justice and the Chair of the Advisory Board appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to explain the decision. The nominee participates in a question and answer period with Members of Parliament and Senators, only for information purposes. The prime minister ultimately makes the decision on appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada, as the approval of neither the House of Commons nor the Senate is required. The appointment process is covered by the media. Although the appointment process is sometimes criticized for not involving the consent of either of the two federal legislative bodies or the provinces, appointments of individual Supreme Court of Canada judges are rarely controversial and most often widely praised.

Robin MacKay and Maxime Charron-Tousignant, “The Role of the Supreme Court of Canada. Membership and the Nomination Process,” HillNotes, Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 14 June 2021. <https://hillnotes.ca/2021/06/14/the-role-of-the-supreme-court-of-canada-membership-and-the-nomination-process/>

Corruption  
Prevention  
Score: 8

Canada has historically ranked very high for the extent to which public officeholders are prevented from abusing their position for private interests. There is an Auditor General to audit government spending. There is also a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to help prevent conflict between public duties and private interests. There is a strong investigative media. Generally, societal tolerance for corruption is really low. Nevertheless, a significant scandal emerged in 2019, when it came to light that Justin Trudeau had used his powers as prime minister to influence the actions of the attorney general to prevent the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin for bribing the son of former Libyan Prime Minister Muammar Qadhafi. The scandal also illuminated what many regard as a flaw in the governance structure of Canada’s justice system. The roles of the minister of justice and attorney general of Canada are held by the same person. When Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould resisted government pressures, the prime minister moved her to a different cabinet position, terminating her role as attorney general in the process. Wilson-Raybould later resigned, and was ousted from the Liberal caucus. A special adviser subsequently produced a report endorsing the current structure, stating that “no further structural change is required in Canada to protect prosecutorial independence and promote public confidence in the criminal justice system” (McLellan, 2019, 1).

Honourable A. Anne McLellan, P.C., O.C., A.O.E, Review of the Roles of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, June 28, 2019, posted at <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2019/08/14/review-roles-minister-justice-and-attorney-general-canada>



# Good Governance

## I. Executive Capacity

### Strategic Capacity

Strategic  
Planning  
Score: 8

Neither the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) nor the Privy Council Office (PCO) has an official strategic planning unit that is specifically dedicated to medium and longer-term scenarios. In 1997, Policy Horizons Canada was established under the PCO with a mandate to provide analysis and help the federal public service anticipate emerging policy challenges and opportunities. Its budget is small, however, and this unit has not reported through the PCO since 2007.

In practice, however, central agencies and particularly PCO and the Department of Finance have expert capacity dedicated to planning and priorities, both in policy agenda-setting and rollout. Budgets typically consider five-year horizons and various medium-term scenarios in setting the fiscal framework; planning initiatives are undertaken in lead-up to Speeches from the Throne; and larger initiatives such as innovation and skills are examples of efforts at more medium-term visioning. Given the authority and influence vested in these central agencies, the planning capacity of the government of Canada is as strong as that of other Western countries.

The current Trudeau government has also made ample use of special advisory groups to provide information and consultations on a number of policy areas (e.g., economic growth, cultural policy and issues relating to young people).

Expert Advice  
Score: 9

Canadian government departments and agencies effectively tap into expertise of academics and other experts outside the government in multiple ways. Many government departments and agencies have advisory committees, which can have considerable influence but rarely a dominant role in policymaking.

Most recently, in response to COVID-19, such expert counsel has become more prominent. The federal government has struck an Industry Strategy

Council tasked with advising on economic growth and competitiveness. Also established has been the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force to advise on vaccine candidates and development, especially since the country lacks domestic supply. Moreover, the existing National Advisory Committee on Immunization has played a critical role throughout the pandemic. Mona Nemer, named Canada's new Chief Science Adviser in September 2017, continues to provide advice on issues related to science and government policies that support it, including evidence-based decision-making and open government science fully available to the public.

Citation:

Innovation, Science and Economic Development 2020. "Minister Bains announces new Industry Strategy Council," 8 May 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2020/05/minister-bains-announces-new-industry-strategy-council.html>.

National Research Council Canada. "COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force," 22 September 2020, <https://nrc.canada.ca/en/corporate/covid-19-vaccine-task-force>.

Office of the Chief Science Adviser of Canada, Annual Report of the Chief Science Adviser of Canada, 2020, [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h\\_98146.html](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_98146.html)

### Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise  
Score: 9

Draft bills are vetted primarily by the Privy Council Office and to a lesser extent by Finance Canada and the Treasury Board. These central agencies are highly prestigious and central-agency experience is extremely important for advancement to senior levels within the federal public service. Consequently, central-agency staff members are highly skilled and possess the comprehensive sectoral-policy expertise needed for the regular and independent evaluation of draft bills based on the government's strategic and budgetary priorities.

Line Ministries  
Score: 9

Line departments and central agencies have interrelated and complementary capacities for the coordination of policy proposals, with ultimate authority lying with central agencies. Thus, line ministries in Canada have a responsibility to involve the Privy Council Office which supports the prime minister and his cabinet in the preparation of policy proposals. Financing of policy initiatives and program design are also vetted by Finance Canada and the Treasury Board respectively.

Cabinet  
Committees  
Score: 8

Cabinet committees have both the legal and de facto power to prepare cabinet meetings in such a way as to allow the cabinet to focus on vital issues. The de facto power to sort out issues before they go to cabinet belongs to senior officials in the Privy Council Office and, should it be required, the Prime Minister's Office, not to cabinet committees. Still, this allows the cabinet to focus on strategic policy issues.

Ministerial  
Bureaucracy  
Score: 8

Many policy proposals are coordinated by line ministries with other line ministries. However, due to issues of departmental mandates and authorities, this process is generally not as effective as the central-agency coordination process. On certain issues, the line department may be unwilling to recognize the role or expertise of other line departments, or have fundamental differences of perspectives on the issue, and hence may fail to consult sufficiently and/or coordinate a policy proposal with others.

For policy proposals going forward to cabinet, line departments are, however, required to undertake the necessary consultations to ensure the proposal has been considered by other relevant ministries. Central agencies perform a critical oversight and steering role in this process. Moreover, during the pandemic a wide array of programming was rolled out quickly to respond both to urgent economic and health needs, necessitating close coordination among line departments as well with central agencies. This response is indicative of the coordination undertaken both horizontally among ministries as well from a central perspective.

Informal  
Coordination  
Score: 8

Canada's federal system has no formal provisions that deal specifically with federal-provincial coordination. Pressing federal-provincial issues and other matters that require intergovernmental discussions are usually addressed in the First Ministers' Conference, which includes the prime minister, provincial premiers and territorial leaders, along with their officials. These meetings are called by the prime minister and have typically been held annually, but there is no formal schedule. The lack of any requirement for the conference to be held regularly has been a cause for concern, as it is critical for first ministers and the prime minister to engage in face-to-face discussions or negotiations, given the many policy areas that demand federal-provincial coordination.

During the pandemic, however, the mechanisms for federal-provincial-territorial (F/P/T) coordination were activated on a relatively sustained basis as the country grappled with the crisis, including economic shocks, procurement shortages, vaccine rollout and acute shortages within the healthcare system. As a result the period since March of 2020 has been one of the most active periods of F/P/T consultations, at times with First Ministers' calls occurring on a weekly basis.

Digitalization for  
Interministerial  
Coordination  
Score: 7

The effective control exercised by cabinet over the ministries mostly obviates the need for elaborate technical means of coordination. That said, the government created Shared Services Canada (SSC) in 2011, which is mandated to provide a unified IT infrastructure for the federal government that is modern, secure and reliable. SSC delivers email, data center, network and

workplace technology device services to all government departments and agencies in a consolidated and standardized manner. The common IT program and platform naturally enables improved and secure information, and data sharing across all government agencies.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the consolidation of IT infrastructure through SSC has not gone smoothly, and the department has been criticized for slow service delivery and for putting some federal agencies at risk. The federal government has been unsuccessful in the implementation of two major digital technologies, the Phoenix payroll system and the government-wide Canada.ca email reorganization. A recent PBO report stated that a functional pay system would not be operational until 2023 and costs for revamping the system could tally to CAD 2.6 billion. These failures cast serious doubt on the ability of the federal government to make effective use of digital technologies.

However, as the pandemic has shown, government services were able to support the move to virtual work by federal government employees, as well as the enormous demands placed on the system given the rollout of new programming. A fuller evaluation of this period will be needed going forward.

Citation:

Shared Services Canada, Departmental Results Report: 2019-2020, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/shared-services/corporate/publications/departmental-results-report-2019-20.html>.

Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Costs Associated with Replacing the Federal Pay System, May 16 2019, [https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2019/Federal-pay-system-Phoenix/Costs\\_Associated\\_with\\_Replacing\\_the\\_Federal\\_Pay\\_System\\_EN.pdf](https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2019/Federal-pay-system-Phoenix/Costs_Associated_with_Replacing_the_Federal_Pay_System_EN.pdf).

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2018/19: Digital Operations Strategic Plan: 2018-2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-operations-strategic-plan-2018-2022.html#ToC8>.

### Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application  
Score: 7

On 28 August 2019, the Impact Assessment Act (IAA), which created the new Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act of 2012, came into force.

The IIA implements many recommendations of an expert panel established in 2016 to review the federal approach to project assessment. The IIA is not uncontroversial, however. Although environmental groups have acknowledged that the IAA represents an improvement over the much-criticized Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, they have expressed strong concerns that the scope of projects to which it applies is too limited. The new IIA has also been the source of intense frustration in Western Canada. Many worry it will devastate an oil industry already struggling with constrained pipeline capacity.

The Impact Assessment Agency established under the new Act continues the functions of regulatory impact assessments which were conducted under the previous legislation. The Agency is authorized to conduct assessments, undertake research, monitor compliance, engage in consultations and “promote harmonization“ of assessments with other levels of government.

Citation:

Impact Assessment Act (S.C. 2019, c. 28, s. 1), full document available at <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-2.75/index.html>

Quality of RIA  
Process  
Score: 7

The quality of regulatory impact assessment in Canada has arguably improved under the new Impact Assessment Act, passed in 2019. The new legislation expands assessments beyond the environmental effects of a designated project to include impacts on social and health systems, on the economy, and on Indigenous peoples, in each case considering current and future generations. A determination of whether a designated project should go ahead requires a consideration of whether it is in the public interest, of how it impacts on sustainability, and whether it will facilitate or hamper the federal government’s climate change commitments. The IAA established the new Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, which is now responsible for conducting RIAs. Additionally, it increases the scope of public participation in the conduct of RIAs, beginning with a new early-planning phase, and is aimed at significantly increasing participation by Indigenous groups and expanding consideration of the impact a project may have on Indigenous groups and peoples.

RIA results are accessible under Freedom of Information provisions. However, there is little evaluation of the quality of RIAs by independent bodies.

Sustainability  
Check  
Score: 7

Canada does not have a formally adopted sustainability strategy. In a sense, this is not surprising, as there are different types of sustainability (environmental, economic, social). There is also no consensus – legislatively based – as to what sustainability means or to how it should be measured. To be sure, many RIAs address sustainability issues, but the methodologies used differ widely. That noted, however, the new legislation of the Impact Assessment Act has broadened assessments considerably (including future generations) and generally RIAs do consider short-term, medium and longer-term implications of projects, as for example with issues of erosion in biodiversity.

Citation:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/policy-guidance/practitioners-guide-impact-assessment-act.html>

Quality of Ex  
Post Evaluation  
Score: 8

As with other aspects of Canada's RIA regime, ex post evaluation differs between laws and regulations. While laws are not subject to systematic ex post evaluation, departments and agencies are expected to regularly review existing regulations to assess their impacts and develop refinements.

In 2016, the Treasury Board of Canada introduced a new "Policy on Results." Evaluations of programs, policies and priorities under the policy is to be a "systematic and neutral analysis of evidence related to relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of policies and programs." Those evaluations can be done through the Treasury Boards' resource alignment reviews and internally by departments themselves.

In 2018, the federal government introduced the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act (S.C. 2018, c.27, s.13) which provided for government policies, programs and services to take into account "gender" and "diversity" both in their design and impacts. As a result, Treasury Board has put in place gender-based plus analysis which requires departments to annually report on the impacts of policies and programs in terms of their access and inclusiveness.

In practice, it is frequently the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) that evaluates government programs and initiatives ex post. The OAG is formally charged with so-called performance audits, which aim to provide an independent, objective and systematic assessment of whether government programs are being run with due regard for the economy, efficiency and environmental impact. The OAG has considerable discretion regarding which programs it will examine, and takes requests from parliamentary committees, members of parliament, citizens, civic groups and other parties to conduct audits in specific areas. These audits generally undertake an extensive analysis of the issues under consideration. The OAG conducts between 25 and 30 performance audits each year, publishing the results.

Government of Canada, "Integrating Gender-Based Analysis Plus into Evaluation: A Primer," 30 September 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/evaluation-government-canada/gba-primer.html>.

Treasury Board of Canada, Cabinet Directive on Regulation, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/federal-regulatory-management/guidelines-tools/cabinet-directive-regulation.html>.

Treasury Board of Canada, Policy on Results, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=31300>.

### Societal Consultation

Public  
Consultation  
Score: 8

The Canadian government holds consultations with economic and social actors on many issues. These consultations are motivated more by the desire to obtain meaningful input from Canadians than by a desire to sell a particular

policy to the population, as this is typically done through other means. The most important consultations relate to the preparation of the annual budget. While the importance of trade unions in the consultation process has fallen significantly in recent years, this is not necessarily the case for other groups.

The duty to consult and accommodate Canada’s Indigenous peoples as laid down in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 has always been part of the legal and constitutional relationship between Canada and its Indigenous population. Two 2004 Supreme Court decisions (Haida Nation v British Columbia and Taku River Tlingit First Nation v British Columbia) state that the Crown has a duty to consult and, if appropriate, to accommodate Indigenous peoples in relation to actions that could adversely affect their rights. However, many First Nations leaders allege that there is a general and persistent lack of meaningful consultation at both the federal and the provincial level.

Since coming to power in 2015, the Liberal government has organized public consultations and engaged with a large number of stakeholders across many policy areas including innovation, childcare, and so-called pharma-care (drug insurance).

**Policy Communication**

Coherent  
Communication  
Score: 9

The Liberal government’s communication policies are more open than those of its Conservative predecessors. Ministers are responsible for coordinating communications between their departments, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and the Privy Council Office (PCO). However, the Prime Minister’s Office has not fully relinquished its control over ministers and departments. The PMO’s objective is still to deliver coherent messages to the public. The prime minister conducted regular televised briefings during the pandemic.

Both the PCO and PMO are typically highly successful in coordinating communication from all departments – both from a political and administrative perspective. This was particularly borne out during the pandemic when messaging around health and safety measures, as well as around government programming was critical.

**Implementation**

Government  
Effectiveness  
Score: 8

The current Liberal administration, elected as a minority government both in 2019 and again in 2021, has had to pivot quickly in response to the pandemic and the health crisis, business closures and unemployment which that brought. However, in quick succession in the spring of 2020, the government rolled out programs designed to support businesses, keep workers on the payroll and

support those whose incomes had been impacted, primary among these being the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. The Office of the Auditor General has found that CERB and CEWS were designed extremely rapidly, considered a wide array of relevant parameters and modifications were undertaken as needed “in real time.” However, as the programming was premised on post-payment controls, substantive audits will need to be undertaken going forward.

With respect to election promises made by the current federal administration, the government has made progress on day care, mandated vaccinations for federally-regulated domains and invested CAD 4 billion in water infrastructure for Indigenous communities. However previous commitments on reduction of carbon emissions remain a challenge and, as the OECD has commented, Indigenous peoples remain “underprivileged” on key socioeconomic indicators such as income, employment, housing and health.

Many socioeconomic problems targeted by public policy are complex phenomena only partly amenable to public policy action. In addition, many of the programs funded by Canada’s federal government – including healthcare, post-secondary education, social services and the integration of immigrants – are implemented by provincial governments and require provincial cooperation to achieve federal policy objectives. However, in terms of responsiveness to the pandemic, the government reacted quickly to the crisis and indeed undertook historic measures in a very short time-frame.

Liberal Party of Canada, Forward. For Everyone. 2021, <https://liberal.ca/our-platform/>.

OECD, Economic Surveys: Canada 2021, 2021, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Office of the Auditor General of Canada, COVID-19 Pandemic, Report 6, Canada Emergency Response Benefit, [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_202103\\_01\\_e\\_43783.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_202103_01_e_43783.html)

Office of the Auditor General of Canada, COVID-19 Pandemic, Report 7, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, 2021, [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_202103\\_02\\_e\\_43784.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_202103_02_e_43784.html).

Wernick, Michael (2021) *Governing in Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics*, On Point Press.

Ministerial  
Compliance  
Score: 10

In the Canadian system, the prime minister, in consultation with political staff, forms the cabinet and appoints his or her ministers, who serve on a discretionary basis. At the beginning of every mandate, ministers are sent a mandate letter by the PMO. They then work to implement the agenda outlined in this mandate letter, and are evaluated accordingly.

Any cabinet minister who is perceived by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) to be a political liability will have a short career.



Deputy ministers (DMs) are tasked with ensuring implementation of the government's priorities and supporting their respective Ministers and their portfolios. Deputies are appointed by the Prime Minister on the advice of the clerk of the Privy Council Office and are selected on a non-partisan basis through a vetting process, usually after an extensive career in public service in differing types of operational and policy roles.

Citation:

Government of Canada, "Guidance for Deputy Ministers," <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1614387410146/1614387435325>.

Monitoring  
Ministries  
Score: 10

When appointed to a portfolio, a minister receives a mandate letter from the prime minister, while a deputy minister receives one from the clerk of the Privy Council. The importance of mandate letters depends on changing political and economic circumstances. In the case of the current government, ministers' mandate letters detail priorities for their departments as seen from the center. The minister is subsequently evaluated on his or her success in achieving the objectives set out in the mandate letter. This procedure results in the PCO continually monitoring line-department activities to ensure they are in line with the mandate letter.

The current Liberal government has, for the first time, made public the mandate letters. The media and the general public are now in a position to better monitor the activities of ministers to assess the degree to which they achieve the tasks set out in the mandate letters.

Monitoring  
Agencies,  
Bureaucracies  
Score: 8

There are specific government procedures for monitoring both Crown Corporations and Special Operating Agencies. Both these entities fall under the Federal Accountability Act, thus have appropriate fiscal stewardship. In the case of Crown Corporations, these corporations and their mandates are established through legislation and they operate both on a "commercial" model as well public policy goals. Special Operating Agencies, while having some independence, operate under the auspices of their respective ministries with a specific mandate and public policy goals.

Citation:

Government of Canada, "Overview of federal organizations and interests," <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/reporting-government-spending/inventory-government-organizations/overview-institutional-forms-definitions.html>

Task Funding  
Score: 9

Canadian provinces deliver key public services, notably healthcare and education. Their share of government spending has risen dramatically over recent decades and now accounts for roughly 78%, compared to an OECD average of 32% (2016 data).

Canada’s federal government enables provinces to fulfill nearly all of their tasks adequately. The federal government transfers funds earmarked for healthcare through the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and for education, social assistance, and child services through the Canada Social Transfer (CST). In addition, Canada has an Equalization program, which provides payments to provinces whose fiscal capacity falls under the national average in order to bring these provinces to that average. The CHT is the object of almost constant debate. Population aging and the pandemic have put tremendous long-term pressures on provincial healthcare systems. Provincial Premiers have pressed the federal government to cover 35% of all healthcare costs. The federal contribution is currently 22%.

Citation:  
 Béland, Daniel, André Lecours, Gregory Marchildon, Haizhen Mou and Rose Olfert, *Fiscal Federalism and Equalization Policy in Canada. Political and Economic Dimensions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

Constitutional  
 Discretion  
 Score: 10

Canada is, by all measures, one of the most decentralized federations in the world (Dardanelli et al., 2019). The division of power in the federation is such that provincial governments have exclusive autonomy to legislate and to implement policy in their constitutionally-assigned fields of jurisdiction. Provinces exercise the entirety of their constitutional autonomy, and any attempt by the federal government to direct policy in provincial fields of jurisdiction meets with staunch resistance, first and foremost from Québec but also from Alberta and from some other provinces. The resistance faced also depends on the timing of measures and the policy sector (Lecours, 2019).

Citation:  
 Dardanelli, Paolo, et al. 2019. “Dynamic De/centralization in Federations: Comparative Conclusions,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, vol. 49, no.1, 194-219.

Lecours, André. 2019. “Dynamic De/centralization in Canada, 1867-2010,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, vol.49, no.1, 57-83.

National  
 Standards  
 Score: 5

There are very few national standards for public service delivery in Canada, as provincial governments have extensive freedom to determine their policy objectives, instruments, designs, etc... When the federal government transfers funds to the provinces, it could have some practical leverage to establish standards but much of the time chooses not to use this leverage. National standards are often opposed by provinces (always by Québec), which means they involve a political struggle the federal government might not win. In the area of healthcare, provincial governments formally have to conform to the five principles of the 1984 Canada Health Act (care must be available to all eligible residents of Canada, comprehensive in coverage, accessible without financial or other barriers, portable within the country and during travel abroad, and publicly administered) but funds from the Canada Health Transfer

Effective  
Regulatory  
Enforcement  
Score: 7

(CHT) are rarely withheld. The Canada Social Transfer (CST) that supports, among other things, social assistance in provinces comes with the “low bar” condition that provincial governments do not exclude potential recipients on the grounds that they have just moved to the province.

The quality of regulatory enforcement in Canada is generally high. While regulatory agencies occasionally face resource constraints, these are not usually the result of interest group lobbying. Interest groups in Canada tend to focus on obtaining leniencies during the creation of regulations rather than after regulations are promulgated.

One notable exception is the regulatory oversight and environmental assessment review of major infrastructure projects, where final decisions are in the hands of the ministry or cabinet. In many instances, stakeholders have complained that government approval did not follow the rules and regulations set out by law. Two recent high-profile cases highlight the issue: both the Enbridge west coast oil-port proposal (under former prime minister Harper) and the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion (under current prime minister Trudeau) obtained positive recommendations from the National Energy Board, all required federal and provincial environmental-assessment certificates, and final ministerial approval. Yet, federal courts ultimately struck down both approvals.

The government recently reformed its impact assessment legislation, creating a new Impact Assessment Agency to centralize federal evaluations of major projects. It additionally created a new Canadian Energy Regulator to oversee Canada’s interprovincial and international pipelines and powerlines. These bodies have respectively replaced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the National Energy Board.

**Adaptability**

Domestic  
Adaptability  
Score: 8

Organizational change is constantly taking place within the federal government and some of this change reflects international developments. However, unlike countries in the European Union, Canada is not a member of a supranational organization that might necessitate adjustments in organizational structures and reporting relationships. One area that has seen change is international affairs. There is now Global Affairs Canada which has three ministers: 1) Foreign Affairs, 2) International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development and 3) International Development. This new structure (integrated yet differentiated) allows for distinct but coordinated treatments of diplomacy, international trade, and aid/cooperation.

International  
Coordination  
Score: 7

Canada's government has the capacity to provide global public goods in coordination with other actors. Indeed, it has done so throughout its history. Prime Minister Trudeau has repeatedly sought to carve out an active role for Canada in international bodies such as the United Nations. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to be a strong voice on the international stage. While the government did submit Canada's candidacy to serve on the UN Security Council in 2021-2022, that did not prove to be successful.

With respect to the Afghan crisis and the return of the Taliban, Canada has committed to settling 40,000 Afghans in Canada and has been working with international partners toward that end. To date, however, progress on that front has been minimal, with just over 4000 Afghans having been settled in the country and with substantial criticism that the process for application to Canada was slow in the face of the enormity of the crisis.

Citation:

Government of Canada, "First charter flight of privately sponsored Afghan refugees arrives in Canada, 2 December 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/12/first-charter-flight-of-privately-sponsored-afghan-refugees-arrives-in-canada.html>.

Government of Canada, "Supporting Afghan nationals: About the special programs," 12 December 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/special-measures.html>.

### Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring  
Score: 8

Government structures are constantly changing in Canada, but there are few procedural structures in place to (self-) monitor whether current arrangements are appropriate or whether change has resulted in improvement. Instead, changes are initiated at the will of the government in power, with little ex post evaluation. In the case of the recent merger of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade with the Canadian International Development Agency, for example, the government offered no details about the nature of the amalgamation, nor about the cost savings it was intended to realize.

The current government, which won its previous mandate in part based on the promise of transparency and fairness, has since established a number of independent committees tasked with monitoring certain government processes. For example, in an effort to reduce partisanship in lawmaking, it created an independent advisory board that will aid in the selection of senators, and created the Independent Advisory Board to oversee appointments to the Supreme Court. While the government has acted upon such advice as in recent appointments to the Senate, it remains too early to gauge the long-term impact of these committees.

Institutional Reform  
Score: 7

Citation:  
David Zussmann (2013), Mergers and successful transitions, Canadian Government Executive, Volume 19 Issue 5.

Prime Minister of Canada, "The Prime Minister announces the appointment of Senators," 29 July 2021, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2021/07/29/prime-minister-announces-appointment-senators>.

There is little public evidence that changes in institutional arrangements have significantly improved the strategic-governance capacity of Canada’s federal government. For example, there has been no comprehensive evaluation of Service Canada, a delivery platform for government services established in the 2000s.

The frequency of departmental reorganizations has diminished in recent years. However, in 2017, the Liberal government split Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada into two departments, the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and the Department of Indigenous Services. The two departments respectively focus on renewing a nation-to-nation relationship and improving the quality of services available.

Recently, there has been progress made on certain aspects of Indigenous services, including the lifting of boil water advisories in Indigenous communities and investment in water infrastructure. However, given the ongoing challenges in basic infrastructural needs of Indigenous peoples (water, housing, environmental protection) and slow progress on reconciliation issues, it is unclear how these institutional changes have served these larger needs.

Citation:  
Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, posted at <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637>

## II. Executive Accountability

### Citizens’ Participatory Competence

Political Knowledge  
Score: 6

Most Canadian citizens have only a moderate level of knowledge of public policy issues but many are well-informed on a select few issues such as the environment. Roughly three-quarters of Canadians say they follow the news (Howe, 2010: 44). From a comparative perspective with other advanced-industrialized democracies, Canadians are in the middle of the pack on measures of political attentiveness (Howe, 2010:44). A significant issue is the

poor political knowledge of younger Canadians (18-34), including knowledge of policy issues, in comparison to Canadians 35 years of age or more, which has been linked to lower voter turnout in this young age group (Stockemer and Rocher, 2017).

Citation:

Paul Howe, *Citizens Adrift: The Democratic Disengagement of Young Canadians*. Vancouver: UBC, 2010.

Stockemer, Daniel and Francois Rocher. Age, political knowledge and electoral turnout: a case study of Canada

*Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* Vol. 55 (1), 2017.

Open  
Government  
Score: 8

The government of Canada has two offices, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), whose mandate is to provide independent analysis on government finances and policies. The PBO is charged with providing impartial information on the state of government finances and its estimates of trends in the Canadian economy. On request, the PBO estimates the cost of any proposal under parliamentary consideration. During the 2019 federal election, the PBO carried out a requested evaluation of the cost of programs contained in the political parties' campaign platforms. The OAG provides independent information and expert advice on government programs and activities, and the management of its Crown corporations. Both offices serve parliament, but – since reports usually become public information – they provide ample and objective evidence on the finances and performance of government policies and institutions. The reports are made available online and are often followed with media attention. The quality of information contained in the reports, however, depends heavily on the data obtained by the offices. Government departments and agencies release information in the form of studies and data on their websites, which allows citizens to hold them accountable. Most of this information is available in both official languages in user friendly formats, including for blind people.

In addition, Canada has a large number of non-governmental think tanks, and policy and research institutes that provide additional information, and critique, on a range of policy areas, including social policy, political strategy, economics, technology, industry, business and national defense.

### Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary  
Resources  
Score: 7

All members of parliament from the House of Commons have a "Member's Office Budget" that offers a basic amount to hire staff, commission research, or support events. MPs typically have a staff of 4-5 people. Typically, members of parliament split their staff between the House of Commons and constituency offices. Members of parliament can receive supplementary funding based on some features of their ridings, for example, a higher than

average population (so-called elector supplement) or a large territory (so-called geographic supplement). Members of parliament and senators also have access to the research staff of the Library of Parliament.

House of Commons Canada, "Members' Allowances and Services," Ottawa, 2021. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/MAS/mas-e.pdf>

Obtaining Documents  
Score: 8

Parliamentary committees have the right to receive government documents in the course of their deliberations. Parliamentary committee members frequently ask ministers and officials who give testimony to provide further information in writing. These requests are typically not tied to a formal motion, and the information received may be given to the members without forming part of the parliamentary record. Sometimes, the information is requested through a formal motion adopted by the committee. However, documents sometimes arrive incomplete and redacted because of confidentiality considerations.

Summoning Ministers  
Score: 8

Ministers are normally expected to appear before parliamentary committees. Ministers may decline a committee invitation, but they have to appear, or send a representative, when receiving a formal summons approved through a committee motion. A deputy minister may appear instead of a minister for questions linked to departmental operations. The parliamentary secretary may stand in for the minister if the matter at hand is legislative in nature.

Summoning Experts  
Score: 10

Parliamentary committees have the right to summon any expert they choose to provide testimony, and experts are frequent contributors to the work of committees. However, committees cannot compel experts to appear. Parliamentary committees have allowed experts to appear virtually long before the pandemic.

Task Area Congruence  
Score: 9

As of 2021, there were 24 standing committees of the House of Commons and 18 standing committees of the Senate.

The new (2021) Liberal cabinet has 39 members. As such, there are more ministries than committees with some variation in the number of ministries over time. However, since some cabinet positions (e.g., the leader of the government in the House of Commons) have no corresponding ministries and some ministers (e.g., the minister for international development) are heads of agencies under the umbrella of a larger ministry, the number of ministries is very close to the number of House of Commons standing committees (by far the most important of the two houses). Therefore, parliamentary committees are largely capable of monitoring ministries.

## Media

Media Reporting  
Score: 9

Canada's main TV and radio stations produce a mix of infotainment and high-quality information programs. They are, for the most part, not enmeshed in partisan politics. Public broadcasters, including the CBC/Radio-Canada and

provincial TV channels such as TV Ontario (TVO), provide extensive and often high-quality coverage of politics and news, with a minimum of five to seven hours per week of in-depth information on government decisions. Both CBC and Radio-Canada have their specialized news channels, CBC News Network and Réseau de l'information (RDI), as does the private broadcaster CTV with CTV News Channel. Examples of high-quality public affairs shows include TVO's *The Agenda*, CBC's *The House*, and RDI's *Mordus de politique*. Canadian media coverage is enhanced by international news channels such as CNN and BBC World News. There is little competition among public broadcasters. Private broadcasters, with the exception of the Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel, are generally focused primarily on infotainment, but also provide some analysis of government decisions. Print media such as the *Globe and Mail*, *La Presse*, and *Le Devoir* provide comparatively high-quality and comprehensive analysis of public policy.

The Liberal government revamped the Access to Information Act (ATIA) in 2019 to, among other things, enable the Information Commissioner to order government institutions to disclose requested records. The ATIA underwent a statutory review in 2021. The context of the pandemic further highlighted the value of open and accessible data on public health and other subjects.

### Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party  
Decision-Making  
Score: 7

There are currently four major political parties at the federal level in Canada: the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Québécois (BQ).

In April 2013, the LPC elected Justin Trudeau as their new leader, through an open-voting process that included non-party members. The policy formation process is also relatively open, new ideas are gathered from Liberal members and supporters through local groups, then written up as policy resolutions that are voted on and prioritized first within provincial and territorial associations and then at the LPC's biannual conventions. All resolutions passed at the convention become official party policy. Following the 2021 federal elections, the LPC formed another minority government.

Decisions in the CPC are mostly made by the elite, and while grassroots views and resolutions passed at party conventions constitute input, they are not binding. In August 2020, the CPC chose Erin O'Toole, as the new party leader. O'Toole temporarily remained leader despite the disappointing performance of the CPC at the 2021 federal elections when the party finished second once more and stayed in opposition. O'Toole had steered the CPC toward the center in the hope of defeating the LPC, and he must now contend



with the so-called social conservatives members of the party who want restrictions on abortions and looser gun control. (A month after the observation period Erin O’Toole who was voted out of his leadership position on February 2, 2022 by his party’s caucus in the House of Commons).

Unlike the CPC and most of the LPC, the NDP is integrated with its provincial counterparts. A wide range of views are expressed at NDP policy conferences, but all policy resolutions passed are non-binding on the party leadership. Jagmeet Singh is the first person of an ethnic minority background to lead a major federal party. The NDP is split between members who want the party to retain a left-wing ideological purity and members who think the party should position itself toward the center-left with the objective of forming a government. Jagmeet Singh has aligned the party with the first camp.

The BQ differs from all other parties in that it runs candidates only in Quebec. Although the BQ garnered only 7.6% of the vote in the 2019 federal elections, it won 32 seats because its support is concentrated in Québec. It is an important political force in federal politics. While the BQ has some informal ties with the provincial Parti Québécois, which also supports the independence of the province, there are no organizational links. BQ leader Yves-François Blanchet is very popular and he wields a lot of power within the party. The BQ does not accept questioning of the secessionist position but debate has occurred on the strategy for reaching independence.

Association  
Competence  
(Employers &  
Unions)  
Score: 8

Many business associations, employers’ groups and trade unions develop policy proposals that identify the causes of problems, make use of scholarly research to support their analysis, propose technically feasible measures to attain policy objectives, take account of long-term interests, and anticipate policy effects. Among the most competent associations in this respect are the Business Council of Canada, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the Canadian Labor Congress and Unifor, formerly the Canadian Auto Workers. Reflecting Canada’s federal structure, many employers’ associations and trade unions are provincial in nature. In Québec, where something close to a corporatist model has existed since the 1960s, trade unions such as the Confédération des syndicats nationaux have been influential policy voices, especially on issues such as the French language, socioeconomic inequalities, and gender.

Association  
Competence  
(Others)  
Score: 8

Interest groups and social movements are influential in shaping public policy in Canada. In some policy sectors, like the environment and climate change, they put forward concrete policy proposals backed up by costs/benefits analysis. In other areas, they work to put issues onto the political and policy agenda, and they propose principles upon which reforms can be based.

Some of the most influential noneconomic interest associations include Greenpeace Canada and the David Suzuki Foundation, which have been pushing for the federal government to adopt ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets (in 2021, the federal government committed to Canada reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 40%-45% below 2005 levels by 2030); the National Council of Women of Canada, a long-standing organization advocating on women's issues; EGALE, a prominent association advocating for members of the LGBTQ+ community; Black Lives Matter Canada, a deconcentrated platform mobilized to struggle for racial minority rights; and religious-based organizations such as Focus on the Family Canada and Real Women of Canada, which have promoted socially-conservative positions like restrictions on abortion.

In addition to these associations, there are several influential think tanks, for example, the Institute for Research on Public Policy, the Fraser Institute, the CD Howe Institute, and Pembina Institute.

### Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office  
Score: 10

The auditor general is appointed by parliament on the advice of the prime minister for a 10-year term. Once in place, however, auditor generals have virtually a free hand in deciding who to audit and when. The Office of the Auditor General is accountable to parliament, and the removal of an auditor general requires the approval of both the House of Commons and Senate. Reports of the auditor general are reviewed by the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.

Reports of the auditor general – including the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development – span a broad range of topics. Recent reports have included audits on IT solutions, shipbuilding programs, the Canada Child Benefit, procurement of personal protective equipment, safe drinking water, and of course rollout of the emergency benefits launched during the pandemic. Government departments in turn respond to the Audits with planned action measures for addressing concerns. The OAG is a highly effective institution in its undertakings.

Citation:

Office of the Auditor General of Canada. [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_lp\\_e\\_856.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_lp_e_856.html).

Ombuds Office  
Score: 8

The federal government, unlike some provinces, does not have a single ombuds person heading an office dedicated to hearing citizens' concerns, but it does have several important organizations functioning as equivalents for specific matters such as the Commissioner of Official Languages; the Information Commissioner of Canada; the Privacy Commissioner of Canada; the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner; the Commissioner of

Lobbying of Canada; and the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada. All these Commissioners are officers of Parliament and are responsible directly to Parliament. There are also ombuds offices with special mandates, such as the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defense and the Canadian Forces, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, and the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise.

While the federal level does not have one ombudsman office, there is an array of agencies – that are accountable to Parliament – with clearly defined mandates and which are outspoken on issues of concern.

Data Protection  
Authority  
Score: 9

Canada's data protection authority is the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. The legislation governing federal government use of private data is the Privacy Act. As an officer of parliament, the commissioner can audit suspected government breaches of the Privacy Act. The Privacy Commissioner of Canada is also responsible for complaints linked to the treatment of personal information in the private sector under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. Analogous structures exist at the provincial and territorial levels.

Citation:  
<https://www.priv.gc.ca/en>

## Address | Contact

### **Bertelsmann Stiftung**

Carl-Bertelsmann-Straße 256  
33311 Gütersloh  
Germany  
Phone +49 5241 81-0

### **Dr. Christof Schiller**

Phone +49 30 275788-138  
christof.schiller@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

### **Dr. Thorsten Hellmann**

Phone +49 5241 81-81236  
thorsten.hellmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

### **Pia Paulini**

Phone +49 5241 81-81468  
pia.paulini@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Lecours, A., Sharpe A. & M. Thunert (2022).  
Canada Report. Sustainable Governance Indicators.  
Bertelsmann Stiftung: Gütersloh.  
<https://doi.org/10.11586/2022087>

As a living document, this report is updated and revised on an annual basis. The authors cited here are the most recent authors to have contributed to this report.

Previous report versions can be accessed here:  
[SGI 2022 | Publications \(sgi-network.org\)](https://www.sgi-network.org)

[www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de)  
[www.sgi-network.org](http://www.sgi-network.org)