

FEDERAL ELECTION BRINGING VOTERS THE NEWS THEY NEED

On or before October 21, Canadians will vote in a federal election. They will vote to choose their Member of Parliament (MP). The political party with the most MPs elected will be in power. Their leader will be Canada's prime minister.

Irene Gentle is the editor of the *Toronto Star*. It's her job to make sure Canadians have the information they need to make a smart decision about who to vote for on election day, and to cover the election results, often within minutes after the polls have closed.

Covering a federal election is one of journalism's most daunting tasks. Gentle says she has covered more federal, provincial and local elections than she can remember.

"I take that job really, really seriously," she says. "Any election has an awful lot at stake. If we're not doing our job, people may be going to the polls without the information they need."

To cover the October election, Gentle's team started in January. Even though most people weren't very interested in reading about an election that was so far away, they had to start researching and writing articles so that when it got closer, people were more eager to know about the main issues and candidates, there were lots of articles available.

"The way people consume news now is an endless river, an endless torrent—like a giant waterfall—and (they) can just dip in," says Gentle. She needs to make sure that river of news is always full of the articles people need.

Of course, the *Toronto Star* is just one news outlet covering the federal election. All of Canada's major newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and news websites are also publishing articles to help educate voters. Often, the news outlets try to be first with the election results. They want to be the first one to announce who won and who lost.

But above all, they need to be accurate. It's no good being first, if you're wrong. "One of the worst things that can happen to a journalist is that they can be wrong," says Gentle. "It ruins their own reputation; it hurts their organization. Responsible journalists are working really hard and doing everything they can to verify their writing and not have a mistake in it. If there is a mistake – because they're human – we try to correct it as quickly and appropriately as possible."

Because many people get their information online, especially

when it's breaking news like election results, editors have to make sure the articles can be easily found online. Journalists have to not only research and report, they often have to tweet and post as well.

A lot has changed since Irene Gentle first started covering elections. The reading audience is bigger than ever, and there is more information available to them than ever before. And the audience is far more sophisticated, says Gentle. That means journalists have to be better than ever at bringing readers the information they need.



DIG DEEPER

LINKS TO LEARN MORE

Elections Canada is an independent organization that runs Canadian federal elections: elections.ca

Many major news organizations have web pages dedicated to information about the election.

Toronto Star: thestar.com/news/federal-election

Maclean's magazine: macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/federal-election-2019-frequently-asked-questions/

CBC: newsinteractives.cbc.ca/elections/poll-tracker/canada/

This CBC website "projects" (makes educated guesses, based on data) who will win the election.

Note: Its projections will change greatly as the election gets closer.



DID YOU KNOW?

IT TAKES A TEAM!

To cover a federal election, it's "all hands on deck." Here are some of the jobs journalists will be doing: interviewing candidates and voters; writing about issues such as jobs and healthcare; fact-checking to make sure the parties' claims are true; posting articles on websites and social media and making sure they can be easily found by readers; writing in-depth articles on the candidates, the parties and the ridings; writing about local, provincial and national issues; educating first-time voters on how to cast their ballot; researching and writing about the rights and responsibilities of citizens; monitoring which candidates are winning and losing; reporting on the final results; and much more.



EDUCATION CONNECTION

THE 2019 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

Discuss! A "majority government" is when a political party has more seats (MPs) than all of the other parties, combined. Majority governments have a lot of power because when they want to create legislation (laws) the other parties will have a difficult time out-voting them. Currently, the Liberals have 177 seats, so they have a majority government. Do you think they will still have a majority after the October 2019 election?

Investigate! There are three political parties that are most likely to win the federal election. They are: The Liberals, led by Canada's current prime minister, Justin Trudeau; the Conservatives, led by Andrew Scheer; and the New Democrats, led by Jagmeet Singh. But there are many other political parties registered in Canada.

Find five more and list them. What is a political party?

Check out their websites and read their platforms.

(A platform is a list of things the party considers most important, or wants to accomplish.)

