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Canada has voted

The course is being set anew

Dr. Bernd Althusmann

In the midst of a serious crisis with the USA, Canada is once again governed by a minority government of the Liberals after early elections. The conservatives miss out on the election victory they thought was certain despite a good result. Canada seems to be on its way to a two-party system.

In early elections, Canada elected a new parliament on April 28, 2025, following the resignation of former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in January and amid a trade war with the United States. The final election result is still not available one week after the election, because in some constituencies with the tightest results, a recount must be carried out automatically according to the electoral law. With 43.7 percent (169 seats), the Liberals have so far been three seats short of their own majority. Until January, the conservatives and their top candidate Pierre Poilievre were almost unassailable with a lead of over 25 percent. They achieve 41.3 percent and reach 144 seats, but their top candidate unluckily loses his own in Ottawa-Carleton.

However, Poilievre will get a new chance at a constituency in Alberta very soon. After Trudeau's resignation and due to US President Donald J. Trump's verbal attacks against Canada against Canada, the mood of change in favor of the Conservatives throughout the last year, which was largely directed against former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, turned in favor of the liberal Mark Carney, who as a former central bank director was not previously a member of parliament.

Such a drastic shift in the political mood within just a few weeks is likely to be rather rare, and not only in Canada. The Canadians were also seized by a patriotic mood and the country flew

the flag. The Canadians came together visibly indignant and angry, but also full of concern about the course of the USA. The actual problems of the country were largely overshadowed by this. The highly polarized election campaign may have led Canada into a two-party system, while other parties suffered some heavy losses. Expectations are high for the new government to be sworn in on May 12 under the leadership of Mark Carney. Whether a stronger independence from the USA will succeed is open. Whether the economic losses for Canada can be averted and the cost of living or the tax burden of Canadians can be reduced in the near future remains to be seen. It is also currently unclear whether the Conservative Party will remain united. The best election result of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) since 1988 would speak for this. The future of the young and dynamic party leader Pierre Poilievre depends on it.

The road to early elections

Since mid-2023, an election victory for the Conservative Party and a defeat for the Liberals around Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had been indicated in almost all election polls until the beginning of 2025 with a clear trend. The Conservative Party Canada (CPC) with its 45-year-old top candidate and opposition leader in

parliament, Pierre Poilievre, was for a long time clearly ahead of the ruling Liberals with over 25 percentage points and could hardly be caught up. Popular dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his minority Liberal government increased steadily in 2024. Around 60 percent of the population wanted a change in late autumn. Too much had been announced but not implemented. The cost of living has risen, as has the tax burden and inflation. Since the introduction of the CO2 tax in 2022, it should increase from 50 Canadian dollars (CAD) to 95 CAD by April 2025. This burdened industry and consumers alike. The productivity of Canadian industry shrank, and unemployment rose to 6.7 percent by the first quarter of 2025. In regional early by-elections in individual constituencies to parliament, the decline of the Liberals last year was almost predetermined. The Conservatives achieved one election victory after another in Liberal strongholds such as Toronto in June 2024 or a few months later in Montreal. In a commentary on 23.09.2024 in THE HILLTIMES, commentator Michael Harris compared Trudeau's behavior to that of Joe Biden in the US election campaign, who realized too late that he was the cause of the problem but not the solution.

Everything indicates that Pierre Poilievre will achieve a landslide victory for the conservatives. The Liberals' prospects of winning the regular elections again in October 2025 were considered almost hopeless at 1-4 percent. The mood of change that has been going on continuously for a year, which was due in particular to the person of former political star Justin Trudeau, was too great. In his own party, doubts about his ability to lead grew incessantly. His party-tactical attempt to bring the Liberals back to the strongest force in an early election in September after overcoming the COVID pandemic in 2021 failed. The Liberals were behind the Conservatives with 34 percent with 32.2 percent, but won 158 constituencies, the Conservatives with 119 significantly less. Nevertheless, it was no longer enough for the Liberals around Justin Trudeau to govern alone, which would have been 170 seats in 338 constituencies. Only with the toleration of the left-progressive, social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) around party leader

Jagmeet Singh was Trudeau able to continue to govern in a minority government that was by no means unusual for Canada. More or less large or multi-party coalitions such as in Germany are unusual due to the majority voting system and also traditionally in Canada.

Canadians' tolerance of numerous mistakes by the Trudeau government has continued to decline noticeably significantly since autumn 2024. (see also the development under <https://338canada.com/federal.htm>)

The Conservative Party Canada (CPC) rose steadily to over 44 percent. With around 218 seats, they would have formed their own majority in parliament as early as 2024 if elected. The Liberal Party Canada (LPC) (more social-liberal oriented) was at only 22 percent, the New Democratic Party (NDP) at 18 percent, the Bloc Quebecois party, which is mainly concentrated in the province of Quebec, at about 8 percent, the Green Party Canada (GPC) at about 4 percent, and the People's Party Canada (PPC) at 2 percent. The opinion research institute NANOS-Research repeatedly documented the increasing worries and fears of Canadians in surveys last year. At the top of the list was the concern among the population about the loss of their own jobs, followed by the threatening decline in the country's economic power.

Canada looked with increasing concern at rising inflation and the increased cost of living, rising rents and real estate prices, increased immigration, the weak medical health care system, or rising homelessness. Canada's migration policy, which had been quite liberal until then, apparently increasingly reached the limits of acceptance among the population. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's goal of immigration of up to 500,000 people per year was making housing scarce, and the announced new construction was lagging far behind demand. In particular, the significant increase in the cost of living became the focus of the dispute. because this directly affected the broad middle class and, of course, the lower income groups, and especially young people who saw their dream of owning their own house receding into the distant future. Trudeau's attempt in December 2024 to provide temporary relief by suspending VAT from December 15, i.e. shortly before Christmas,

combined with a payment of CAD 250 to every Canadian in February 2025, fizzled out in the tax policy network of the provinces. This maneuver by the Liberal government, often described as a billion-dollar election gift, culminated in a serious conflict between Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Prime Minister Trudeau in December 2024. Freeland resigned. The end of Justin Trudeau's government as prime minister was initiated here at the latest. Previously, and his government team had tried in vain to dissuade US President Donald J. Trump, who was re-elected in September, from announced punitive tariffs against Canada. At the beginning of the trade war, Trump accused Canada of doing too little to combat illegal migration and cross-border drug crime. Trudeau's visit to Donald Trump in Mara-Lago obviously failed, especially since US President Trump mocked Prime Minister Trudeau as governor afterwards and repeated his demand that Canada should become the 51st state of the USA. In this already muddled situation, the NDP also turned its back on Trudeau and demanded his resignation.

Prorogation as a lifebuoy for the Liberals

Trudeau wanted to pre-empt a possibly successful vote of no confidence in parliament in January 2025 and officially asked the Governor General, Mary Simon, to suspend the parliamentary session until March 24, 2025. An option of the Canadian constitution that his predecessors had already used strategically in the past. At the same time, he announced his immediate resignation as leader of the Liberal Party and, as a consequence, as prime minister until a successor is appointed. A party tactical move that allowed the Liberals until the beginning of March to use the so-called prorogation to determine their new party leader in an internal party competition. Parliament and also the conservatives had to watch these events almost helplessly. Their demand for parliament to be convened to determine a package of measures against Donald Trump's punitive tariffs against Canada's closest ally, which were perceived by all parties as unjustified, were unsuccessful. Instead, on March 10, 2025, the

Liberals elected former central bank chief Mark Carney as Trudeau's successor as party leader by a clear majority. Carney, who did not have a seat in parliament but was considered a proven financial expert, prevailed with a majority of over 80 percent within the party against his competitors, among whom was the resigned Finance Minister Freeland. After he was sworn in as the new Prime Minister two weeks before the end of the prorogation with a somewhat reduced government team consisting of the former ministers of the Trudeau government, he dissolved the parliament the day before by virtue of his office and by reapplying to the Governor General and announced new elections for 28 April within the 36-day rule provided for in the electoral constitution. This is also a move to avoid a possibly successful vote of no confidence against the new government in parliament. A short election campaign was supposed to bring the decision and was considered the appropriate time in this situation and the regular election date was rejected after 4 years on the third Monday of October.

Parties and Strategies in the Election Campaign in Comparison

The Liberals wanted to seize the opportunity with Mark Carney. The Trump administration's continued attacks on Canada with changing arguments and now newly justified with an alleged disadvantage of the USA in trade with Canada within the framework of the existing USMCA agreement led to an automatism of rallying behind the incumbent government in this economic crisis, which is familiar from other crises. The top candidate of the conservatives transformed Trump's attacks - possibly thoughtlessly - into "Canada First". The Trump slogan "America First" had some Canadians from the US fight still in bad memory. Poilievre perhaps did not succeed sufficiently clearly, to break away from the populist image of a supposedly Canadian Trump, his critics say, especially since the memory of Poilievre's support for trucker blockades in Covid times was apparently still attached to him. As a brilliant speaker in parliament and as opposition leader, he had also earned a reputation as a tough

attacker, which was probably interpreted to his disadvantage in the situation of the Trump administration's verbal attacks on Canada. The Conservatives' actual campaign strategy of highlighting the country's weaknesses after almost 10 years of Liberal government and branding Mark Carney as identical to Trudeau did not catch on with voters as much as hoped in a short and highly polarizing election campaign. He continued his election campaign mode almost unchanged on the advice of his closest advisors. Only two weeks before the election, Pierre Poilievre presented his detailed government program. It ranged from the need to build housing to tax relief for the middle class, the removal of regulatory and tax-related hurdles between the provinces, the expansion of the pipeline infrastructure in a west-east direction to boost Canada's oil and gas business, to the fight against drug-related crime or the increase in defense spending for the Canadian armed forces in view of the increasing activities of Russia and China in the Arctic.

The Liberals, on the other hand, adopted numerous demands with almost identical content. In addition to the difficult distinction in responding to Trump's attacks on Canada, this strategy of adopting the demands of the political opponent may have had a partially neutralizing effect. The Liberals and Carney responded to Poilievre's "Change" election call with "Canada strong".

So, the Canadians were not strategically unthoughtfully faced with the not easy choice of either choosing a change in times of great uncertainty or remaining proven and strong in order to win the battle with the USA. ("Strong").

Nevertheless, Poilievre continued to fight tirelessly, which was to pay off in some provinces. In numerous and well-organized party forums, supported by his wife and his entire family, he tried to turn the mood back in the direction of the Conservative Party. Poilievre continued to inspire his followers with "Axe the Tax", "Cut the Budget", "Stop the Crime". Nevertheless, his opponents within the party, some of whom also had majorities in responsible positions in the provinces, increasingly sowed doubts about his election campaign strategy. The incumbent

Premier Doug Ford from the densely populated and economically important province of Ontario deliberately put his re-election ahead of the general election on March 13 and emerged as the clear winner of the election with his Progressive Conservative Party (PCPC) at the beginning of March. The PCPC is regionally represented in some provinces and is part of the Conservative Party of Canada. While Ford only had Poilievre's strategy questioned in the background and partly publicly by his election strategists a few days before the decisive election to the House of Commons, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper (until 2015) jumped in with his party colleague Pierre Poilievre and described him as the only hope for Canada. After all, both had worked under his government, Carney as a bank executive and also Poilievre as a young minister for housing. Poilievre had deeply convinced him.

Despite this prominent support, Pierre Poilievre fought against falling poll ratings until the last day before the election. While in the central TV debates the top candidates wrestled with each other for the attention of the voters and Poilievre appeared rather calm and statesmanlike this time, it became increasingly clear in election polls that the mood in Canada had changed at the latest since Carney's appointment. The contents of the party programs were virtually overwhelmed by repeated threats of punitive tariffs by the US president. To make matters worse, Trump indirectly let Canadians know that he appreciated Carney's experience as a financial expert. Mark Carney had used the saying "Elbow up" known from the national sport of ice hockey for the Liberals to Trump's attacks and in a TV duel on Poilievre's attacks that he, Carney, was quasi-Trudeau 2, simply with the very sober but considered answer "I'm not Justin Trudeau. Period.", which was assessed by political commentators as quick-witted.

Carney has not yet had to deal with a parliamentary debate, as he had never been a member of parliament before. At least after the TV debates, many Canadians realized that it would only come down to two parties and their candidates, because only Poilievre and Carney knew how to address the whole country.

In summary: The election campaign in the 36 days leading up to the election was marked by a strengthening of the Liberals, but towards the end also of the Conservatives again. It came down to a close decision. The provinces that were decisive for the election were ploughed from house to house, from event to event, from farm to farm. The talks with representatives of the First Nations were followed by visits by both candidates to the Arctic in order to illustrate the importance of the country's tradition and culture. The other major parties were increasingly threatened with losses in favor of the Liberals or the Conservatives. Whoever won 172 seats would automatically provide the majority of the 343 seats and thus the next prime minister. This duel was to be a disadvantage for the other parties. The NDP was threatened with significant losses. Even before the election, there was speculation about the possible successor to her party leader Jagmeet Singh. His topics focused on health and equality policy, or social protection were also raised by the other parties. The NDP was increasingly disadvantaged by having held out for four years as the stirrup holder of the minority government of the Liberals. There were many indications that the potential swing voters of the NDP could opt more for the Liberals or the Conservatives. In the past, the traditional voters of the NDP in the provinces were in the area of industrial workers, but also among young students. In this crisis of the country, however, there was little room for the rather soft and sometimes "woke" issues of the NDP, as there was a threat of loss of their own jobs and economic losses. The Canadian Greens had a hard time putting up enough candidates in all constituencies nationwide and were at a few percentage points. Their classic topics such as the environment and climate protection were hardly or little debated in this election campaign. They had already won only 2 seats in the last parliamentary election. The Bloc Quebecois focused almost exclusively and traditionally on promoting benefits for the Quebec region and the French-speaking population in this densely populated province. Other parties did not play a perceptible role at that time. The mood had changed with unprecedented speed. In the last survey shortly

before the election, 2,800 representative respondents saw the Liberals ahead with just under 41 percent, followed by the Conservatives with around 39 percent. With this new starting position, we went into the last weekend before the official election of the Canadian parliament scheduled for Monday. The election was overshadowed by a serious accident on Saturday. In VancouverSouth, an apparently mentally disturbed man had driven his SUV into a crowd of people on the occasion of a traditional lapu lapu festival of the Philippine community, 11 people died and many were injured. The mourning for the victims is still great nationwide, the election campaign was suspended in time and visibly moved, only to enter the last hours until election day after a day.

Election Day

By the day of the election, around 7.3 million of the approximately 29 million eligible voters had already cast their votes nationwide or by e-mail before the polling stations opened in the days before. Around 25 percent more than in the last election in 2012. This suggested a high level of voter mobilisation. Elections were held in 343 (previously 238) constituencies. Only the directly elected candidate with the most votes receives a seat in parliament. Proportional representation or overhang and compensatory mandates, which were known in Germany until the electoral reform, do not exist in Canada. The new number of 343 constituencies consisted of the electoral regions of the Nordic Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and collectively the Atlantic Ocean. Due to the different numbers of inhabitants, the number of constituencies had been slightly increased. The announcement of the election results after the polls close takes place over several hours due to Canada's different time zones. In numerous constituencies, the results were very close. Canadian electoral law automatically provides for a recount in a constituency if there is a slight difference of less than 0.1 percent, which usually extends over several days. On the Friday after the election, two mandates alternated between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The election to the Canadian

parliament, the House of Commons, has so far often been decided in the densely populated provinces of Quebec and Ontario. However, due to the election polls, the result in British Columbia in western Canada was also eagerly awaited. Traditionally, the Conservatives receive good to very good election results in the provinces of Alberta, the center of the oil and gas industry, and in Saskatchewan.

The election evening with the preliminary results from 9 p.m. EST was exciting, the first mandate of the evening was given to the conservatives in the Atlantic electoral region amid the still restrained cheers. While it initially looked like a surprisingly strong performance for the conservatives in Labrador and Newfoundland, the results closed with a solid result for Pierre Poilievre and his CPC. Atlantic-Canada, however, was a disaster for the NDP. From 40 percent, they won just 16 percent in the Halifax region and the Bloc Quebecois won 1 seat. From about 10 p.m., the results were announced in the focus provinces of Quebec and Ontario and only from 9:30 p.m. in Canada's western time zone, the polling stations in the western Pacific districts and the 3 northern Pacific counties closed. But as early as 10:12 p.m. in Ottawa, it was clear from the incoming results for the Ontario and Quebec regions that the Conservatives would no longer be able to achieve a majority of 172 seats.

The only question was whether there would be a minority government or a Liberal majority government with Mark Carney, who won his constituency of Nepean by a clear margin in northern Ontario. The Liberals win 169 seats with an increase of 11.1 percent of the votes cast. Mark Carney announced the victory of the Liberals on election night, even though he was 3 mandates short of the sole government. His opponent, Pierre Poilievre, had a close race in Ontario-Carleton with his opponent, Bruce Fanjoy, of the Liberals. At the end of the count, Poilievre surprisingly lost in his constituency, which he has always won directly since 2004, with 38.6 percent against 42.4 percent for Fanjoy. The mood among the conservatives at the Rogers Center in Ottawa was visibly depressed. The hall had already emptied noticeably when Pierre Poilievre entered the stage late at night together with his wife to announce that with 144 seats and

41.3 percent (+ 7.5 percent) of the 19.6 million votes cast (with a turnout of 68.7 percent), the conservatives had at least achieved their best result since 1988 and that he wanted to remain party leader even without a seat in parliament. The Bloc Quebecois received 6.3 percent (-1.4 percent) and won 23 seats. (- 11 compared to the 2021 election) The clear loser of the evening, however, was the NDP with 7 seats and only 6.3 percent of the total votes cast, which corresponded to a loss of -11.5 percent and a loss of 18 seats. This means that the NDP loses its previous status in parliament, for which it would have needed at least 11 seats. Its party chairman Jagmeet Singh resigned from the party chairmanship on election night. He had also lost his seat.

The Greens received 1.2 percent (-1.1 percent), but party leader Elizabeth May regained her seat in Vancouver Island. The Greens are now represented in the Canadian Parliament with only one seat (previously 2).

The People's Party Canada (PPC), which split from the Conservative Party as a right-wing offshoot in 2018, received only 0.7 percent, losing 4.2 percent and is probably in the process of dissolving. In the 2021 election, it had essentially defined itself by its anti-Corona policy and by its rejection of what it considered to be an excessive climate protection policy.

The Independent party received 0.2 percent of the votes cast, all other parties together only 0.3 percent.

While the conservatives were clearly ahead in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the result in Manitoba was balanced in terms of seat distribution. In British Columbia, a slight lead for the Liberals. In Quebec, the Liberals, together with the Bloc Quebecois, were clearly ahead. In the Atlantic regions, the Liberals were also ahead of the Conservatives again, as expected, with individual constituencies surprisingly won by the Conservatives. In Yukon and the North-West Territory, the respective candidates of the Liberals won, and in Nunavut the candidate of the otherwise nationally punished NDP.

Evaluation of the election result in Canada

In this election, Canada has moved much further towards a two-party democracy. The attacks of US President Donald Trump have had a significant influence on the mood and the vote in Canada. Concerns about economic losses for Canada have worried the older electorate, and in particular the workforce in the strong industrial regions. Securing Canada's sovereignty and dealing with Trump's attacks has largely decided the election. In this situation, the experience and expertise of the financial expert Mark Carney and his level-headed, in some technocratic-seeming manner, was possibly an advantageous and stable element of his election campaign, which had a calming effect on the insecure population. In the middle of the election campaign, he certainly declared the hitherto close partnership with the USA to be "irretrievably shattered" and sent a clear signal to Europe with his official first trip abroad to Paris and London. At the same time, however, he declared Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and even India to be important partners of Canada again after the diplomatic conflicts in the last two years. In addition, Carney's professional profile as a former governor of the Bank of England and Bank of Canada may have covered a frequently cited deficit of the Liberal Party in the area of economic and financial policy. He quickly distanced himself from the decisions of the previous government and, as prime minister with a brief office bonus, simply threw off the burden of the Trudeau era.

The Conservatives with Pierre Poilievre tried in vain to draw a direct line between Trudeau and Carney and led a passionate election campaign against the wrong decisions of the Trudeau government, which, however, did not run without interference from their own ranks, especially the conservative prime ministers from the provinces. Pierre Poilievre was able to inspire people especially at his events, but also in conversations on site. His supporters fought tirelessly for him. He took office with the firm will to overcome the challenges and problems of the country. To do this, people would have to be ready for change in order to overcome the wrong decisions or the

hurdles of economic development, such as the eliminate the different tax and contribution systems of the individual provinces. The prospect of change in the crisis may have unsettled some potential conservative voters.

In addition, according to Poilievre, Canada should build on its strengths in energy and raw materials, build the pipeline infrastructure that has so far been neglected, in order to position itself more independently of the USA and to better exploit trade with Europe on the basis of the CETA agreement. As is well known, the necessary expansion of a transport infrastructure meets with resistance from those affected when it becomes concrete.

With his tough announcements against illegal migration and drug-related crime, however, he found the greatest popularity not only among his party supporters but also penetrated far into the bourgeois camp of the center and the possible swing voters with his statements on the fight against crime. The large gains of 25 seats for the conservatives are a clear indication that his arguments were popular throughout the country and not only in the classic electoral strongholds of the conservatives in Alberta or Saskatchewan. The conservatives were also able to make gains in British Columbia and Ontario. Both major parties gained, mostly from former voters of the NDP or the Bloc Quebecois.

In the Atlantic constituencies, the Conservatives' result was better than expected in terms of the polls. However, the elections were decided for the fourth time in a row with changing seats in Ontario and Quebec in favor of the Liberals. The only downer for Pierre Poilievre and his Conservative Party is that he was unable to defend his own seat in parliament. His response to Donald Trump's attacks with Canada First may have been questionable for some undecided skeptics because he had successfully fought the dispute with Trudeau and the Liberals in a similar way throughout the 2024 primary year. The not entirely successful demarcation from the change of mood against the Trump administration may have put Poilievre at a disadvantage. During the crisis, many voters sought security, stability and protection from the United States. At least a gap had arisen in the way the election campaign was conducted, which could no longer be closed in

time. This was also obviously the reason for the change of mood, which was largely directed against the person of the then incumbent Prime Minister Trudeau last year.

What happens next?

After just under a week after winning the Battle River–Crowfoot riding in Alberta for the Conservatives, the victor, Damien Kurek, has stepped down to make way for Pierre Poilievre. A by-election will now be scheduled in this safe Conservative seat, allowing Pierre Poilievre to return to Parliament sooner than expected. The Conservatives will have to navigate the interim period in Parliament without their party leader and will convene a party convention to reflect on the election outcome. The convention will also address statements made by some Conservatives in the middle of the campaign.

At this stage, it is expected that Pierre Poilievre will remain party leader. Senior and re-elected Conservative MPs are already publicly defending his campaign and openly criticizing those who voiced dissent behind closed doors. It will now be crucial for Pierre Poilievre to use his full authority to hold the party together.

By the next election in four years, the Conservatives will once again have strong prospects. Whether Mark Carney—now heading a renewed Liberal minority government—can deliver on his promises with shifting majorities remains to be seen. He is expected to consolidate the federal budget, respond to the United States with both resolve and prudence, reduce taxes and fees, strengthen the economy, boost housing construction, and tackle the nationwide rise in crime more effectively than his predecessor. The new cabinet is scheduled to be sworn in and meet on May 12.

Parliament will reconvene for the first time since January 6, 2025, on May 26 for its inaugural sitting, returning to the still-under-renovation House of Parliament in Ottawa. The following day, King Charles III of the United Kingdom is expected to deliver the Throne Speech as Canada's Head of State.

Much remains to be done before the G7 Summit, scheduled for June 15–17, 2025, in Kananaskis, Alberta—an event that will likely include the participation of Germany's new Chancellor, Friedrich Merz (MP). Preparations are also underway for Canada Day celebrations on July 1, amid truly eventful times.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

Dr. Bernd Althusmann
Leiter des Auslandsbüros Kanada

www.kas.de/canada

bernd.althusmann@kas.de

