

## The Canadian Parliamentary System and the Russian Semi-Presidential System

	RUSSIA	CANADA
SEPARATION OF POWERS	<p><i>Semi-Presidential systems.</i> Consistent with the principle of the <i>separation of powers</i>, it is not permitted to hold membership in both the federal executive and legislative branch simultaneously. The executive branch, comprising the President, the Prime Minister and his/her Cabinet, proposes legislation to the Federal Assembly (the Duma and Federation Council) for ratification. The legislature can also propose legislation, which requires the signature of the executive branch.</p>	<p><i>Parliamentary systems.</i> Members of the executive branch must be members of the legislative branch. This system, whereby the government are Members of Parliament, is known as the <i>fusion of powers</i>. The executive may hold office and exercise power only so long as it retains the support of a majority of the legislative branch.</p>
GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES (EXECUTIVE)	<p><i>Head of State.</i> The Russian President is the head of state. He/she is directly elected for a fixed term of four years and can only be removed through impeachment.</p> <p><i>Head of Government.</i> The Prime Minister is the head of government. He/she is nominated by the President, and subject to parliamentary ratification. If the President's candidate for PM is rejected by the Duma on three occasions, the President must dissolve the Duma and appoint an interim Prime Minister, and announce State Duma elections.</p> <p>The Prime Minister and his cabinet may be dismissed without any reason by the President.</p>	<p><i>Head of State.</i> The head of state in Canada is the Governor-General. For historical reasons, he/she is formally appointed by the British monarch. However, in actual fact, the decision on the appointment is made by the Prime Minister of Canada. The Governor-General's role is almost exclusively ceremonial, although in situations where an election has not produced a party with a clear majority in the House of Commons, the Governor General is responsible for selecting the party leader whom he/she believes is likely to be able to form a government that can gain the confidence of the House. The last time a Governor General's prerogative powers were required was in 1972.</p> <p><i>Head of Government.</i> The Prime Minister (PM) is the head of government in Canada. The PM is the leader of the political party in the lower house of parliament with the largest number of seats. The PM appoints the members of the Cabinet, all of which must be MPs or Senators.</p>

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Government Structures (Legislative)	<p><i>The Duma.</i> The 450-seat lower house of the Russian parliament. Half of the members are elected in single member districts and half are elected by proportional representation (with a 5% threshold). Elections, which are held every four years, do not coincide with the election for the President. In the 1995 election, 4 political parties were elected, as well as over 100 “independents”. In post-election developments, 3 additional political blocs were formed by deputies’ groups.</p> <p>Since the December 1999 election, there are six party factions (Communists, Unity, Union of Right Forces, Fatherland-All Russia, Yabloko and LDPR) as well as three deputies’ groups (Agro-industrial bloc, People’s Deputy, Russia’s Regions).</p> <p>The Duma’s duties include passing legislation and voting on the President’s nomination for Prime Minister. The Duma can vote no confidence in the government, which serves as a recommendation for the President to dismiss the Prime Minister and the cabinet. It also appoints and dismisses the Chairman of the Central Bank.</p> <p><i>The Federation Council.</i> The Federation Council (FC) is Russia’s upper house. Each of 89 Russian regions is represented by two senators in the Federation Council - one is elected by the legislative body and the other one is appointed by the head of the federative subject’s executive power (governor). The Federation Council must ratify most bills passed by the Duma.</p> <p>The FC plays other important roles such as ratifying judicial appointments, confirming use of armed force abroad, impeaching the President for treason or other grave crimes</p> <p>The FC also ratifies the President’s appointment and dismissal of the Prosecutor General.</p>	<p><i>House of Commons.</i> The Lower House of the Canadian parliament has 301 Members (MP’s), each representing a single member constituency. Constituencies are divided nationally based on population. There are currently 5 parties represented in the House of Commons. It is extremely rare for an MP to be elected who is not a member of a political party. Most bills originate in the House of Commons and are usually introduced by the government. In Canada, bills introduced by private members are given limited time for debate and are rarely adopted.</p> <p>The Senate is the unelected upper house of the Canadian Parliament. Senators are named by the Prime Minister and serve until they reach the age of 75. All legislative bills passed by the House of Commons must be passed by the Senate and vice-versa. The Senate has a veto on all legislation. For constitutional amendments, it has only a suspensive veto.</p> <p>With the exception of money bills, government legislation can be introduced first in the Senate, although this happens rarely.</p> <p>The number of senators from each province is specified in the Constitution.<sup>1</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup> Provincial representation in the Senate is as follows: the Maritimes Division 24 (New Brunswick 10, Nova Scotia 10, Prince Edward Island 4); the Ontario Division 24; the Quebec Division 24; the Western Division 24 (British Columbia 6, Alberta 6, Saskatchewan 6, Manitoba 6); additional representation 9 (Newfoundland 6, Northwest Territories 1, Yukon Territory 1, Nunavut Territory, 1).

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ACCOUNTABILITY	<p>In Russia, the President is directly elected and therefore is accountable directly to the electorate. The President has a substantial independent power base.</p> <p>The PM and Cabinet are accountable both to the president and the Duma. The President can dismiss the PM and cabinet, while the Duma can only recommend dismissal of the government (Article 117.3). Two votes of no confidence within a 3-month period by the Duma results in mandatory Presidential dismissal of the government or dissolution of the Duma.</p>	<p>The government is accountable to the legislative branch, and must resign if it loses the support of a majority of MPs present in the chamber through a vote of no confidence or the defeat of a “confidence bill”.<sup>2</sup> In addition, when elections occur, a government's record is subject to review by the electorate.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Confidence bills are not defined, but include the budget and major pieces of legislation whereby defeat of that legislation forces the resignation of the government.