



**National  
Program**  
*for the*  
**Grave Sites**  
*of*  
**Canadian  
Prime  
Ministers**



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Canada

## **The Prime Ministers of Canada**

The Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, 1 July 1867 -  
5 November 1873, 17 October 1878 - 6 June 1891  
The Honourable Alexander Mackenzie, 7 November 1873 - 8 October 1878  
The Honourable Sir John Joseph Caldwell Abbott, 16 June 1891 -  
24 November 1892  
The Right Honourable Sir John Sparrow David Thompson,  
5 December 1892 - 12 December 1894  
The Honourable Sir Mackenzie Bowell, 21 December 1894 - 27 April 1896  
The Right Honourable Sir Charles Tupper, 1 May 1896 - 8 July 1896  
The Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 11 July 1896 - 6 October 1911  
The Right Honourable Sir Robert Laird Borden, 10 October 1911 -  
10 July 1920  
The Right Honourable Arthur Meighen, 10 July 1920 - 29 December 1921,  
29 June 1926 - 25 September 1926  
The Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King, 29 December 1921 -  
28 June 1926, 25 September 1926 - 7 August 1930, 23 October 1935 -  
15 November 1948  
The Right Honourable Richard Bedford Bennett (later Viscount),  
7 August 1930 - 23 October 1935  
The Right Honourable Louis Stephen St. Laurent, 15 November 1948 -  
21 June 1957  
The Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker, 21 June 1957 - 22 April 1963  
The Right Honourable Lester Bowles Pearson, 22 April 1963 - 20 April 1968

## **Text written by Christopher Moore**

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## **National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers**

Canada has been blessed by able and dynamic prime ministers who have developed a vision for our nation and its place in the world. Their public careers have all had a profound impact on our history and evolution as a country. In recognition of this contribution, all of our deceased prime ministers have been designated as persons of national historic significance. In addition, to acknowledge their important role, the Government of Canada recently announced a program designed to protect and honour the grave sites of our Canadian prime ministers.

The objective of the National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers is to ensure that the grave sites are conserved and recognized in a respectful and dignified manner. Another important objective of the National Program will be to provide Canadians with information on the lives and accomplishments of each former prime minister as well as the locations of their final resting places. The following initiatives will be undertaken:

- in association with the family and the cemetery, comprehensive Conservation Plans will be prepared for each grave site to ensure that the sites are conserved for the future;
- individual grave site ceremonies will be held at each cemetery to commemorate our deceased prime ministers;
- a panel, with information regarding the life and accomplishments of the prime minister, as well as a Canadian flag, will be installed—subject to the approval of the family and cemetery authorities;
- this brochure is produced to highlight the contribution of our prime ministers and to increase the awareness of their grave sites; and,
- working with our partners, Parks Canada has developed a prime ministers' grave site web page with links to other prime ministers' web sites and Parks Canada's National Historic Sites which commemorate prime ministers.

## **The Office of Prime Minister in Canada**

The office of prime minister is not mentioned in Canada's founding constitutional Act, the British North America Act of 1867. Yet the prime minister has always stood at the heart of Canadian government.

In our parliamentary democracy, the governor general acts on advice given by ministers who hold the support of the people's elected representatives in the House of Commons. The key to that system has always been the prime minister – in theory an anonymous adviser, but in fact the public face of power in Canada.

The prime minister leads the team of ministers which runs the government of Canada. Since the government depends on support from the House of Commons, a prime minister will also lead his or her party in Parliament. And since general elections determine which party controls Parliament, a successful prime minister must also be a public campaigner who can win support among the voters.

Some prime ministers have held office for many years, others for just weeks. All have faced the burden of trying to administer the government, control business in Parliament, and lead the nation.

"Canada is a hard country to govern," said Sir John A. Macdonald. Almost a century later, another prime minister, Lester Pearson, recalled those words and added, "I am perhaps more aware of that than I used to be."

**The Right Honourable  
Sir John A. Macdonald**  
(1815-1891)



Born: 11 January 1815, Glasgow, Scotland

Died: 6 June 1891, Ottawa, Ontario

Buried: Cataraqui Cemetery, Kingston, Ontario

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, has always been ranked among the greatest Canadian political leaders.

Born in Scotland and raised around Kingston, Ontario, Macdonald was already a political veteran in 1864, when he played a key role in the making of the Canadian Confederation. He was the undisputed choice to be the first prime minister.

A visionary statesman and a determined Conservative partisan, Macdonald was also a brilliant parliamentary tactician and a much-loved campaign leader. He said he intended to see the gristle of a nation hardened into bone, and his National Policy of tariff protection, westward expansion, and a railroad to the Pacific helped lay the basis of a transcontinental nation.

Macdonald died in Ottawa, still prime minister, on June 6, 1891, and was buried in Kingston.





**The Honourable  
Alexander Mackenzie**  
(1822-1892)



Born: 28 January 1822, near Dunkeld, Scotland

Died: 17 April 1892, Toronto, Ontario

Buried: Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

An immigrant from Scotland who left school at thirteen, Alexander Mackenzie prospered as a stonemason and contractor in Sarnia, Ontario. A lifelong reformer, he believed in thrift, hard work, and plain speaking as the keys to success, in politics as in life.

When the Pacific Scandal brought down Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative government in 1873, Mackenzie formed Canada's first Liberal cabinet. He won the general election that followed and held the office of prime minister for five years.

A tireless worker, Mackenzie strove to reform and simplify the machinery of government. He introduced the secret ballot, created the Supreme Court of Canada, and struggled to launch the national railway. In the 1878 elections, his party lost to Macdonald's resurgent Conservatives and their National Policy of tariff protection. Mackenzie soon resigned as leader of the opposition. He declined all offers of a knighthood.

Mackenzie held his seat in the Commons until his death. He died in Toronto in 1892 and was buried in Sarnia.



**The Honourable  
Sir John Joseph Caldwell Abbott  
(1821-1893)**



Born: 12 March 1821, Saint-André-Est, Quebec

Died: 30 October 1893, Montréal, Quebec

Buried: Mount Royal Cemetery, Montréal, Quebec

"I hate politics," said John Abbott in 1891. Yet that year he became prime minister of Canada, after more than thirty years of political activity.

Abbott was a successful lawyer, a pillar of Montréal's English business community, and mayor of Montréal. After long service in the House of Commons, he was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1887 and joined Sir John A. Macdonald's cabinet that year. Valued for his legal and administrative skills, he soon became one of its leading members.

When Macdonald died in office, Senator Abbott reluctantly accepted the plea of the divided Conservative Party that he should lead the government. Yet in his eighteen months in office, he revitalized the government and the party. Then his health failed. He retired to private life in 1892 and died less than a year later. The first Canadian-born prime minister is buried in Montréal.



**The Right Honourable  
Sir John Sparrow David Thompson  
(1845-1894)**



Born: 10 November 1845, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Died: 12 December 1894, Windsor Castle, England  
Buried: Holy Cross Cemetery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

John Thompson was a new prime minister with a record of achievement and still full of promise when he died suddenly in 1894, just forty-nine years old.

Thompson had served briefly as Nova Scotia premier before being appointed to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. When Sir John A. Macdonald recruited him to Ottawa in 1885, he quickly became a leading member of the Conservative government. His achievements included the first Criminal Code of Canada.

Thompson had been raised a Methodist but had converted to Roman Catholicism, the faith of his wife, Annie, in 1871. Controversy over his conversion kept Thompson out the prime minister's office when Macdonald died in 1891 but, upon Sir John Abbott's retirement eighteen months later, he became the first Catholic prime minister.

Sir John Thompson died December 12, 1894, at Windsor Castle, where Queen Victoria had just made him a member of her Privy Council. He is buried in Halifax.





**The Honourable  
Sir Mackenzie Bowell**  
(1823-1917)



Born: 27 December 1823, Rickingham, Suffolk, England

Died: 10 December 1917, Belleville, Ontario

Buried: Belleville Cemetery, Belleville, Ontario

Mackenzie Bowell's family emigrated from England to Belleville, Ontario, where he apprenticed on the local newspaper. He became a successful printer and publisher and a prominent figure in the Orange Order, which made him Canadian grandmaster in 1870. Elected to the House of Commons in 1867, Bowell joined the Conservative cabinet in 1878.

A competent, hardworking administrator, Bowell remained in cabinet when he became a senator in 1892. In 1894, as the most senior minister, Bowell succeeded to the prime ministership when Sir John Thompson died suddenly. In office, Bowell struggled with dissent in his party. When seven cabinet ministers deserted him early in 1896, Bowell denounced them as "a nest of traitors." They soon returned, but with elections looming, Bowell agreed to retire.

Bowell was 93 years old and still a senator when he died in Belleville on December 10, 1917.



**The Right Honourable  
Sir Charles Tupper**  
(1821-1915)



Born: 2 July 1821, Amherst, Nova Scotia  
Died: 30 October 1915, Bexleyheath, England  
Buried: St. John's Cemetery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Sir Charles Tupper's public career was long and successful, though he was prime minister for just 69 days in 1896 – the shortest term ever. A Father of Confederation, he spent more than thirty years in national politics.

Nova Scotian by birth, Tupper studied medicine in Scotland and practised as a doctor most of his life. He entered Nova Scotian politics in 1855 and became premier in 1864. As a delegate to the Charlottetown, Québec, and London conferences, Tupper guided his province into Confederation.

Tupper later served as one of Sir John A. Macdonald's key lieutenants. In 1895, he returned from service as Canada's representative in Britain to take over the leadership of the Conservative Party, but his party lost the election that soon followed.

Tupper retired from politics in 1901. He died in Britain in 1915, at the age of 94, and was buried in Halifax.



**The Right Honourable  
Sir Wilfrid Laurier**  
(1841-1919)



Born: 20 November 1841, Saint-Lin, Quebec

Died: 17 February 1919, Ottawa, Ontario

Buried: Notre Dame Cemetery, Ottawa, Ontario

One of Canada's great statesmen and the first francophone prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier believed passionately in Canada as an English-French partnership. "I have had before me as a pillar of fire," he said, "a policy of true Canadianism, of moderation, of reconciliation."

Always distinguished by his debonair charm and intellect, Laurier was first elected to the House of Commons in 1874 and gradually built up his party's strength and his personal following in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. He led the Liberal Party to victory in 1896 and remained prime minister until 1911.

Laurier led Canada in a period of rapid growth, industrialization, and immigration. Through his career, he faced repeated challenges to his vision of Canada, but he said he preferred "sunny ways" over stormy conflicts.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier died, still leader of the opposition, in 1919 and was buried in Ottawa.



**The Right Honourable  
Sir Robert Laird Borden**  
(1854-1937)



Born: 26 June 1854, Grand Pré, Nova Scotia

Died: 10 June 1937, Ottawa, Ontario

Buried: Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa, Ontario

A successful Halifax lawyer from humble origins, Robert Borden led the Conservative Party back to power and guided Canada through the grim years of the First World War.

Borden became leader of the opposition in 1901 and slowly rebuilt his party. In 1911, he swept to power, campaigning against Sir Wilfrid Laurier's plan for free trade with the United States.

In the First World War, Borden committed Canada to provide half a million soldiers for the war effort. His determination to meet that huge commitment led to the conscription crisis in 1917, which split the country on linguistic lines. But the war effort also enabled Canada to assert itself in world affairs, and Borden played a crucial role in transforming the British Empire into a partnership of equal states.

Convinced that Canada had become a nation on the battlefields of Europe, Sir Robert Borden retired in 1920. He died in Ottawa in 1937 and was buried there.



**The Right Honourable  
Arthur Meighen**  
(1874-1960)



Born: 16 June 1874, Anderson, Ontario  
Died: 5 August 1960, Toronto, Ontario  
Buried: St. Marys Cemetery, St. Marys, Ontario

Arthur Meighen, Canada's ninth prime minister, was gifted with intellect and debating skill, but served only two short periods as prime minister.

Raised in Ontario, Meighen prospered in legal practice in Manitoba. He was elected to parliament in 1908 and joined Sir Robert Borden's cabinet in 1913. Meighen quickly became invaluable to the government, skilled in developing complex wartime policies and relentless in debate with the government's critics. In 1920, he succeeded Borden as prime minister, but his party lost the general election of 1921.

Meighen and his party briefly regained power after the inconclusive election of 1925, but they were swept from office in the 1926 election and Meighen soon resigned as Conservative Party leader. He later served in the Senate and made a brief return to elective politics in 1942.

Arthur Meighen died in Toronto in 1960 and was buried in St. Marys, near his southern Ontario birthplace.





**The Right Honourable  
William Lyon Mackenzie King  
(1874-1950)**



Born: 17 December 1874, Kitchener (formerly Berlin), Ontario

Died: 22 July 1950, Kingsmere, Quebec

Buried: Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto, Ontario

Canada's longest-serving prime minister and perhaps its shrewdest political tactician, William Lyon Mackenzie King held the prime ministership for over twenty-one years.

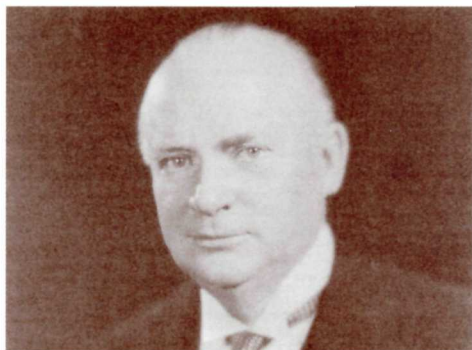
King was born in Kitchener (formerly Berlin) Ontario, and studied at Toronto, Chicago, and Harvard. Chosen Liberal Party leader in 1919 at Canada's first-ever party leadership convention, King took power in the election of 1921. Defeated in 1926, re-elected later that year, and defeated again in 1930, he returned to the prime minister's office in 1935 and remained in office until his retirement in 1948.

Though he cherished the memory of his rebel grandfather, King was a cautious politician who tailored his policies to prevailing opinions. "Parliament will decide," he liked to say when pressed to act. King guided Canada through the Second World War, and he introduced social programs such as unemployment insurance and family allowances.

King died in 1950 at his beloved home, Kingsmere, near Ottawa. He was buried in Toronto.



**The Right Honourable  
Richard Bedford Bennett**  
(1870-1947)



Born: 3 July 1870, Hopewell Hill, New Brunswick

Died: 27 June 1947, Mickleham, Surrey, England

Buried: Village churchyard, Mickleham, Surrey, England

R.B. Bennett became prime minister of Canada in 1930. The worst depression of the century was hitting the country, and economic conditions would blunt his prospects as prime minister.

A bachelor lawyer from New Brunswick who had prospered in Alberta, Bennett was elected to the House of Commons in 1911 and became Conservative leader in 1927. After winning the federal election of 1930, Bennett tried to fight the depression by expanding trade within the British Empire. But his success was limited, and his impersonal style and reputation for wealth had alienated many struggling Canadians.

In 1935, Bennett changed tactics, introducing his "New Deal" of public spending and federal intervention in the economy, but his Conservative Party was swept from office in that year's election. Bennett retired to Britain and was made Viscount Bennett. He died at Mickleham, England, in 1947.



**The Right Honourable  
Louis Stephen St. Laurent**  
(1882-1973)



Born: 1 February 1882, Compton, Quebec

Died: 25 July 1973, Québec, Quebec

Buried: Cemetery Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, Compton, Quebec

Recruited into politics during the crisis of the Second World War, Louis St. Laurent seemed almost above partisan politics as he administered Canada in the prosperous 1950s.

Born in Quebec's eastern townships, Louis St. Laurent practised law in Québec and became one of the country's most respected counsels. Needing strong ministers from Quebec, Prime Minister King recruited St. Laurent to his cabinet in 1941, then supported his selection as the new Liberal leader and prime minister in 1948.

St. Laurent's cabinet team oversaw Canada's expanding international role in the postwar world, welcomed Newfoundland into Confederation, and established new social and industrial policies. But by 1957 both the prime minister and his government began to appear tired and too long in office. Defeated in the general election that year, St. Laurent soon retired. He died at Quebec in 1973 and was buried at his birthplace at Compton.



**The Right Honourable  
John George Diefenbaker**  
(1895-1979)



Born: 18 September 1895, Neustadt, Ontario

Died: 16 August 1979, Ottawa, Ontario

Buried: Beside the Diefenbaker Canada Centre,  
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask.

John Diefenbaker, a prairie populist and a spellbinding speaker, was determined that all Canadians would be “unhyphenated Canadians.” In 1958, he won the greatest electoral victory in the history of Canada’s House of Commons.

Born in Ontario, Diefenbaker moved to Saskatchewan as a child. After military service in the First World War, he became a successful defence lawyer, but in politics he endured year of frustration before winning the leadership of the Conservative party in 1956. He unseated the Liberals in 1957 and won his great majority in 1958.

In office, Prime Minister Diefenbaker introduced the Bill of Rights, promoted northern development, and developed new export markets for prairie wheat. Even after the defeat of his government in 1963, Diefenbaker’s personal charisma made him beloved of many Canadians, and he never lost his House of Commons seat.

John Diefenbaker died in Ottawa in 1979. Thousands saluted the train that brought his body home to Saskatchewan to be buried.



**The Right Honourable  
Lester Bowles Pearson**  
(1897-1972)



Born: 23 April 1897, Newton Brook, Ontario

Died: 27 December 1972, Ottawa, Ontario

Buried: MacLaren Cemetery, Wakefield, Quebec

L.B. "Mike" Pearson, a career diplomat who became a politician, received the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his Middle-East peace-keeping work and became leader of the Liberal Party soon after.

Born near Toronto, Pearson served in the First World War and taught history at university before launching the diplomatic career which led him into politics. Soon after he assumed the leadership of the Liberal Party in 1958, the party suffered one of its greatest electoral defeats. Pearson stayed on as opposition leader and led his party back to power in 1963.

Pearson never had a secure majority in Parliament, but he introduced important social programs, the maple leaf flag, and new initiatives in French-English relations. He also oversaw Canada's 1967 centennial celebrations before retiring.

Lester Pearson died in Ottawa in 1972 and was buried near Wakefield, Quebec, in the nearby Gatineau Hills.





## For Additional Information

If you would like additional information regarding the National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers, please contact:

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You may also wish to experience some homes of our former Prime Ministers by visiting:

- Bellevue House National Historic Site  
Home Of Our First Prime Minister - Sir John A. Macdonald  
35 Centre Street,  
Kingston, Ontario
- Laurier House National Historic Site  
The Home of Two Canadian Prime Ministers:  
Laurier and King  
335 Laurier Ave. East,  
Ottawa, Ontario
- Louis S. St. Laurent National Historic Site  
Commemorating the Boyhood Home of Canada's  
Twelfth Prime Minister  
6 rue Principale  
Compton, Quebec
- Woodside National Historic Site  
The Boyhood home of William Lyon Mackenzie King  
528 Wellington St. North  
Kitchener, Ontario
- Sir Wilfrid Laurier National Historic Site  
Commemorating Sir Wilfrid Laurier  
12 ave. Laurier  
Laurentides, Quebec



# National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers

# Programme national pour les sépultures des premiers ministres du Canada

Parks Canada National Historic Sites Commemorating  
Canada's Prime Ministers

Lieux historiques nationaux de Parcs Canada à la  
mémoire des premiers ministres du Canada

- ① Louis S. St. Laurent National Historic Site  
lieu historique national Louis S. St-Laurent
- ② Sir Wilfrid Laurier National Historic Site  
lieu historique national de Sir-Wilfrid -Laurier
- ③ Woodside National Historic Site  
lieu historique national Woodside
- ④ Laurier House National Historic Site  
lieu historique national de la Maison-Laurier
- ⑤ Bellevue House National Historic Site  
lieu historique national de la Villa-Bellevue

