

## Politics in Canada

The push toward Confederation began in Canada and the Maritimes. Politics in Canada in the mid 1800s was a stormy affair. The province was divided by language, religion, and different opinions on the direction the new province should take. In 1841 when the province was formed, Canada East and Canada West were given an equal number of seats in the government Assembly or Parliament. There were two main political groups in the Assembly: the Conservatives or **Tories** and the Reform Party or **Clear Grits**. In Canada East, the Conservatives were known as the *Parti Bleu* and the Clear Grits were known as the *Parti Rouge*.

### Choosing a Capital

In 1857, the issue of choosing a capital for the province created a major crisis in the govern-

ment. Since 1841, the Assembly had met at different times in Kingston, Québec City, Montréal, and Toronto. It was time for the government of Canada to have a permanent capital. In 1857, the government decided to leave the decision up to Queen Victoria.

When the Queen announced that her choice was Ottawa, other cities were in an uproar! They sneered that Ottawa was nothing more than “a sub-Arctic lumber village.” However, there were good reasons for the Queen’s choice.

- Ottawa is far from the United States’ border and could be protected in an attack.
- It had good water transportation routes for moving troops in case of war with the United States.
- Ottawa was right on the border between Canada East and Canada West and so might satisfy both parts of the province.

### Political Parties in Canada, 1860

	Party	Leader	Beliefs
<b>Canada West</b>	Conservatives or Tories	John A. Macdonald	proud of Canada’s connection with Britain and loyal to Queen Victoria who is officially the head of government during this period
	Reform Party or Clear Grits	George Brown	want change and more say for ordinary people in government; have a great deal of support from rural people
<b>Canada East</b>	Parti Bleu	George-Étienne Cartier	support co-operation between French and English-speaking Canadians
	Parti Rouge	A. A. Dorion	support rights of French-speaking Canadians