

# Times of Transformation

## The 1921 Canadian General Election

BARBARA J. MESSAMORE



**UBC**Press · Vancouver

© UBC Press 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher, or, in Canada, in the case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a licence from Access Copyright, [www.accesscopyright.ca](http://www.accesscopyright.ca).

Printed in Canada on FSC-certified ancient-forest-free paper (100% post-consumer recycled) that is processed chlorine- and acid-free.

UBC Press is a Benetech Global Certified Accessible™ publisher. The epub version of this book meets stringent accessibility standards, ensuring it is available to people with diverse needs.

### Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Times of transformation : the 1921 Canadian general election / Barbara J. Messamore.

Other titles: 1921 Canadian general election

Names: Messamore, Barbara Jane, author

Series: Turning point elections.

Description: Series statement: Turning point elections |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 2024050447X | Canadiana (ebook) 20240505328 |

ISBN 9780774870597 (softcover) | ISBN 9780774870610 (EPUB) |

ISBN 9780774870603 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Canada. Parliament—Elections, 1921. | LCSH: Political campaigns—Canada. | LCSH: Political parties—Canada. | LCSH: Canada—Politics and government—1914-1945. | CSH: Canada—Politics and government—1921-1930. | CSH: Canada—Social conditions—1918-1930.

Classification: LCC JL193 .M47 2025 | DDC 971.062/2—dc23



Canada Council  
for the Arts  
Conseil des arts  
du Canada

Canada



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ARTS COUNCIL



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

*UBC Press is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. This land has always been a place of learning for the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, who have passed on their culture, history, and traditions for millennia, from one generation to the next.*

UBC Press  
The University of British Columbia  
[www.ubcpress.ca](http://www.ubcpress.ca)

# Contents

Foreword: Turning Point Elections and the Case  
of the 1921 Election / vii

*Gerald Baier and R. Kenneth Carty*

Preface / xii

Introduction / 3

- 1 The 1921 Results / 9
- 2 Farmers' Grievances and Early Organization / 27
- 3 Tariffs, Trade, and the Economy / 44
- 4 Disappointed Hopes / 52
- 5 War and Transformation in Farmer Politics / 64
- 6 An Uneasy Peace / 79
- 7 The Growing Power of Labour / 87
- 8 The Winnipeg General Strike and Labour in Federal  
Politics / 98

|           |                                                |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>9</b>  | New Times, New Parties / 110                   |
| <b>10</b> | Economic Troubles and Auguries of Change / 133 |
| <b>11</b> | The Fight for Suffrage / 151                   |
| <b>12</b> | A Long Battle Won / 166                        |
| <b>13</b> | Winning and Losing Quebec / 179                |
| <b>14</b> | The Electoral Process / 198                    |
| <b>15</b> | The 1921 Campaign Underway / 208               |
| <b>16</b> | Election Day and After / 221                   |
|           | Appendix 1: List of Key Players / 247          |
|           | Appendix 2: Timeline of Events / 255           |
|           | Notes / 261                                    |
|           | Suggestions for Further Reading / 310          |
|           | Index / 316                                    |