

William Lyon Mackenzie King

Prime Minister of Canada (1874 – 1950)

King was a lawyer, economist, professor, journalist, and politician, who served as the tenth Prime Minister. With nearly 22 years in the office he was the longest-serving Prime Minister in British Commonwealth history.

King was born in Kitchener, Ontario and went on to earn five university degrees; two from the University of Toronto; his law degree from Osgoode Hall; and an M.A. and a PhD from Harvard, where he also taught. He was first elected to Parliament as a Liberal in 1908 and in 1909 he was appointed as the first-ever Minister of Labour. He lost his seat in the 1911 general election, and went to work for the Rockefeller family's foundation, where he formed a close friendship with JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR. In 1919, the Liberal party leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, died, and at the convention King was elected as Laurier's successor. King remained the leader until 1948.

In the 1921 election, his party defeated the Conservatives, and he became Prime Minister, and despite some missteps won again in 1926. He lost in 1930 and stayed on as Opposition Leader, returning to power with the Liberals in 1935.

In 1939, King asserted Canadian autonomy by waiting until September 10, a full week after Britain's declaration, to declare war. This also allowed Canada to acquire weapons from the United States. Upon declaring war, Canada would not be able to purchase the weapons under the then U.S. policy in force of not arming belligerents. Following the war, King's government introduced the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1946, which officially created the idea of "Canadian citizens". On January 3, 1947, King received Canadian citizenship certificate number 0001.

In 1948, King retired after 22 years as Prime Minister. He was ranked as the greatest Canadian Prime Minister in a survey of Canadian historians.



The photo of King is by YOUSUF KARSH

King with his dog Pat. All his dogs were named Pat, except for one that was named Bob. King was a cautious politician while in office but after his death we learned what an eccentric fellow he was. In 1953, *Time* magazine stated that King claimed to communicate with dead spirits through séances, crystal balls and a Ouija board. Those he was in touch with include several of his dead dogs, his mother, Leonardo da Vinci, FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT, and his predecessor in office Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He would hold séances in his home, where he sought reassurance from the spirit world, rather than seeking political advice. One fellow communicant in the séances was Canadian artist Homer Watson..



Courtesy of the Estate of YOUSUF KARSH