

Cabinet committees, as well as of the full Cabinet. In addition to the determination of the policy underlying the executive acts of the government, there are literally hundreds of other policy issues that must be resolved during the course of a year.

Cabinet must consider and approve the policy underlying each piece of proposed legislation. After it is drafted, proposed legislation must be examined in detail so that each clause and punctuation mark receives Cabinet approval. Recently, between 40 and 60 Bills have been considered by Cabinet during the course of a parliamentary session. Proposals for sweeping reform of large areas of government organization or administration, and policy to be adopted in fundamental constitutional changes or at a major international conference are among the issues which, on occasion, demand this extensive and detailed consideration.

The Cabinet committee system. It is clear that the nature and volume of policy issues to be decided on by Cabinet do not lend themselves to discussion by 25 or 30 Ministers. The first Cabinet committee system was established after the outbreak of World War II but, since that time and more particularly in recent years, growing demands placed on the executive have stimulated the development of new approaches to the delegation of some Cabinet functions to sub-committees.

Cabinet committees tend to have a membership of fewer than ten Ministers and therefore provide a forum capable of ensuring thorough study of policy proposals. The membership of Cabinet committees is confidential and the same rules of secrecy that apply to the deliberations of Cabinet apply to those of Cabinet committees. Otherwise, these committees might develop an importance and authority of their own which would be inconsistent with the principle of the collective responsibility of Ministers. The Prime Minister determines the establishment of Cabinet committees and their composition and terms of reference. Ministers may invite one or two officials to act as advisers during Cabinet committee meetings. The secretariats of the Cabinet committees are provided by the Privy Council Office and the Secretary of a Cabinet committee is usually also an Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet. Treasury Board, which is a Cabinet committee — or more precisely a sub-committee of the Committee of the Privy Council — is the only exception; it has its own secretariat headed by a secretary who has the status of a Deputy Minister.

Under the direction of the Prime Minister, the Secretary to the Cabinet prepares agenda and refers memoranda to Cabinet to the appropriate committee for study and report to the full Cabinet. Except where the Prime Minister instructs otherwise, all memoranda to Cabinet are submitted over the signature of the Minister concerned.

The terms of reference of Cabinet committees cover virtually the total area of government responsibility. All memoranda to Cabinet are first considered by a Cabinet committee, except when they are of exceptional urgency or when the Prime Minister directs otherwise, in which case an item may be considered immediately by the full Cabinet.

On April 30, 1968, the Prime Minister established a new format for Cabinet committees. The trend had been to develop many committees over time to meet situations which eventually disappeared. As a result, there had been a proliferation of committees and the terms of reference of some had become irrelevant. The new system reduced the number of standing committees of Cabinet to eight — four subject-matter committees and four co-ordinating committees. The four subject-matter committees set up were: External Policy and Defence; Economic Policy and Programs; Communications, Works and Urban Affairs; and Social Policy. The four co-ordinating committees were: Priorities and Planning; Legislation and House Planning; Federal-Provincial Relations; and Treasury Board. The accompanying chart indicates the relationship of these committees to the Cabinet process.

The arrangement established in 1968 was further modified in 1969 and 1970. The co-ordinating committees of Cabinet remained but the subject-matter or standing committees were: Economic Policy; External Policy and Defence; Social Policy; Science, Culture and Information; and Government Operations. These committees meet on a regular basis. In addition, there are five special committees of the Cabinet which meet as required: the Special Committee of Council which considers all submissions to the Governor in Council on behalf of the Committee of the Privy Council, and the Cabinet committees on the Public Service, Security and Intelligence, Labour Relations, and Western Grain Problems.

Although the importance of the Cabinet committee system may vary from government to government, evidence of the utility of the system is the growing reliance that has been placed on Cabinet committees since the end of World War II. The following is a brief outline of the