

In addition to the determination of the policy underlying the executive acts of the government, there are 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. 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. Since then, particularly in recent years, growing demands placed on the executive have further stimulated the delegation of some Cabinet functions to its committees.

Cabinet committees tend to have a membership of fewer than 10 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, their membership, 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.

In 1975 there were four co-ordinating committees: Priorities and Planning; Legislation and House Planning; Federal-Provincial Relations; and Treasury Board and five subject-matter committees: Economic Policy; External Policy and Defence; Social Policy; Science, Culture and Information; and Government Operations. These committees meet regularly.

In addition there are five special committees of the Cabinet that 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. The accompanying chart indicates the relationship of these committees to the Cabinet process.

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 involvement of Cabinet and Cabinet committees in respect of a piece of legislation that the government ultimately introduces in the House of Commons or the Senate.

On the initiative of a Minister a policy proposal is prepared, the implementation of which will require new legislation or the amendment of existing legislation. The proposal, over the Minister's signature, is addressed formally to Cabinet, but is considered first by the appropriate subject-matter committee. If approval is given, the proposal goes forward for confirmation or further consideration by Cabinet. If Cabinet confirms the Committee's decision or makes a revision, the Department of Justice is instructed by the Minister who made the proposal to prepare a draft bill expressing in legal terms the intent of the policy proposal. If the draft bill meets with the Minister's approval, he submits it to the Cabinet Committee on Legislation and House Planning where it is examined from a legal rather than a