

Police forces

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Organization of police forces

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The police forces of Canada are organized in three groups: (1) the federal force, which is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; (2) provincial police forces — Ontario and Quebec have their own provincial police forces but all other provinces engage the services of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to perform parallel functions within their borders; and (3) municipal police forces — most urban centres of reasonable size maintain their own police forces or engage the services of the provincial police, under contract, to attend to police matters. In addition, the Canadian National Railways, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and the National Harbours Board have their own police forces.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is a civil force maintained by the federal government. It was established in 1873 as the North-West Mounted Police for service in what was then the North-Western Territory and, in recognition of its services, was granted the prefix “Royal” by King Edward VII in 1904. Its sphere of operations was expanded in 1918 to include all of Canada west of Port Arthur and Fort William (now Thunder Bay). In 1920 it absorbed the Dominion Police, its headquarters was transferred from Regina to Ottawa and its title was changed to Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The force now operates under authority of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (RSC 1970, c.R-9). It is responsible to the Solicitor General of Canada and is controlled and managed by a Commissioner who holds the rank and status of a deputy minister and is empowered under the act to appoint members to be peace officers in all provinces and territories of Canada.

The administration of justice within the provinces, including the enforcement of the Criminal Code of Canada, is part of the power and duty delegated to the provincial governments. All provinces, except Ontario and Quebec, have entered into contracts with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enforce criminal and provincial laws, under the direction of the respective attorneys general. In addition, in these eight provinces, the force is under agreement to provide police services to 177 municipalities, thereby assuming the enforcement responsibility of municipal as well as criminal and provincial laws within these communities. The Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories are policed exclusively by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and therefore criminal offences, federal statutes and all ordinances of the territories fall within the ambit of force responsibility. The force maintains liaison officers in London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, Hong Kong and Washington and represents Canada in the International Criminal Police Organization, which has its headquarters in Paris.

The 13 operational divisions, alphabetically designated, make up the strength of the force across Canada; they comprise 42 subdivisions which include 708 detachments. “Headquarters” Division, as well as the Office of the Commissioner, is located at Ottawa. Divisional headquarters, for the most part, are located in the provincial or territorial capitals, except for “C” Division which is in Montreal and “A” Division which is in Ottawa. “N” Division in Ottawa and “Depot” Division in Regina are training divisions.

A teletype system links the widespread divisional headquarters with the administrative centre at Ottawa and a network of fixed and mobile radio units operates within the provinces. The focal point of the criminal investigation work of the force is the Directorate of Laboratories and Identification; its services, together with those of divisional and subdivisional units and of six crime detection laboratories, are available to police forces throughout Canada.

The Canadian Police Information Centre at RCMP Headquarters, a duplexed computer system, is staffed and operated by the force. Law enforcement agencies throughout Canada have access via a series of remote terminals to information on stolen vehicles, licences, wanted persons and stolen property.