

One of the most important responsibilities of the Governor General is to ensure that the country always has a government. If the office of the Prime Minister becomes vacant because of death, resignation or defeat of the government in the House of Commons, the Governor General must see that the office of the Prime Minister is filled and that a new government is formed.

As the representative of the Queen, the Governor General summons, prorogues and dissolves Parliament on the advice of the Prime Minister. He signs Orders in Council, commissions and many other state documents, and gives his assent to bills that have been passed in both Houses of Parliament and which thereby become acts of Parliament with the force of law (unless Parliament prescribes specifically otherwise). Like the Queen, in virtually all cases constitutional convention binds him to carry out these duties in accordance with the advice of his responsible ministers. Should he not wish to accept their advice, and should they maintain that advice, his only alternative is to replace the existing government with a new government. This alternative could be exercised only if, at the same time, the principle of responsible government could be upheld. This means that the Governor General's discretion in choosing another government is strictly limited to a situation in which a person other than the existing Prime Minister could command the confidence of the House of Commons.

Canadian honours system. An exclusively Canadian honours system was introduced in 1967 with the establishment of the Order of Canada. The honours system was enlarged in 1972 with the addition of the Order of Military Merit and three decorations to be awarded in recognition of acts of bravery. A complete description of these awards and a list of the recipients during 1975 and 1976 are given in Appendix 4.

The Privy Council. The BNA Act of 1867 (Sect. 11) provides for "a council to aid and advise in the Government of Canada, to be styled the Queen's Privy Council for Canada...". The Council that in fact advises the Queen's representative, the Governor General, is the Committee of the Privy Council whose membership is identical to that of Cabinet.

Membership in the Privy Council is for life and includes Cabinet Ministers of the government of the day, former Cabinet Ministers, various members of the Royal Family, past and present Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Premiers of provinces, former Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada and a few other distinguished persons. It is a condition of office that all ministers must first be sworn of the Privy Council. A member of the Privy Council of Canada is styled "Honourable" and may use the initials PC after his name. A member of the Privy Council of Britain is styled "Right Honourable". The Governor General, the Chief Justice of Canada and the Prime Minister of Canada automatically assume the title "Right Honourable" when they take office.

The Privy Council as a whole has met on only a few ceremonial occasions; its constitutional responsibilities to advise the Crown on matters respecting the Government of Canada are discharged exclusively by the Committee of the Privy Council, which is composed of those members of the Privy Council currently holding ministerial office. The legal instruments through which executive authority is exercised are called Orders in Council. The Committee of the Privy Council makes a submission to the Governor General for his approval which he is obliged to give in almost all circumstances; with this approval, the submission becomes an Order in Council. Meetings of the Committee of the Privy Council or a sub-committee of this committee are held without formal ceremony.

The office of the President of the Privy Council was formerly occupied, more often than not, by the Prime Minister but from time to time, especially in recent years, it has been occupied by another minister. On July 5, 1968, the Prime Minister explained that the incumbent of the office of President of the Privy Council would also be the Government Leader in the House of Commons, with the broad responsibility of directing House business, including supervision of the government's replies to questions in the House and of parliamentary returns in