

in Cabinet, others were of major significance and required extensive deliberation, sometimes covering months of meetings of officials, Cabinet committees, and the full Cabinet.

The Cabinet must consider and approve the policy underlying each piece of proposed legislation. After proposed legislation is drafted it must be examined in detail. Recently, between 40 and 60 bills have been considered by Cabinet during a parliamentary session. Proposals for reform 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. The nature and large 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, growing demands on the executive have further stimulated delegation of some Cabinet functions to its committees.

Cabinet committees usually have less than 10 ministers, providing a forum for thorough study of policy proposals. Membership of Cabinet committees is confidential and the same rules of secrecy that apply to Cabinet apply to Cabinet committees. Otherwise, these committees might develop an importance and authority inconsistent with the principle of 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 as advisers during Cabinet committee meetings. The secretariats of the 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 subcommittee of the Privy Council committee — 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 all 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 1977 there were four co-ordinating committees: priorities and planning; legislation and house planning; federal-provincial relations; and the Treasury Board and five subject-matter committees: economic policy; external policy and defence; social policy; culture and native affairs; and government operations. These committees meet regularly.

In addition there were four special and ad hoc committees of the Cabinet that met as required: the Cabinet committees on the public service, security and intelligence, labour relations and the special committee of council which considers all submissions to the Governor-in-Council on behalf of the Privy Council committee. The accompanying chart indicates the relationship of these committees to the Cabinet process.

Growing reliance on the Cabinet committee system since World War II is evidence of its usefulness. The following is a brief outline of the involvement of Cabinet and Cabinet committees with a piece of legislation that the government ultimately introduces in the 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 is addressed formally to Cabinet, but is considered first by a subject-matter committee. If approved, the proposal goes forward for consideration by Cabinet. Proposals with financial implications are considered by the Treasury Board before going forward to Cabinet. If Cabinet confirms the committee's decision or makes a revision, the justice department 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 has the