

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 but only if the principle of responsible government could be upheld. Thus 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 1978 and 1979 are given in Appendix 4.

3.2.2 The Privy Council

The BNA Act of 1867 (Sect. 11) provides for a council to aid and advise in the Government of Canada, called 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 the cabinet.

Membership in the Privy Council is for life and includes cabinet ministers of the government of the day, former cabinet ministers, the chief justice of Canada and former chief justices, occasionally 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. As a condition of office, all ministers must first be sworn into the Privy Council. A member is styled "Honourable" and may use the initials PC after his name. The Governor General, the chief justice of Canada and the prime minister of Canada automatically are given the title "Right Honourable" by royal warrant 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 government matters are discharged exclusively by the cabinet. The legal instruments through which executive authority is exercised are called orders-in-council. A number of ministers, acting as a committee of the Privy Council, make 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.

The office of president of the Privy Council was formerly occupied, more often than not, by the prime minister; in recent years, it has been occupied by another minister who is usually also 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 general, and a special responsibility of ensuring that Parliament, through its operations and organization of business, can effectively function under the increasing pressure of modern government.

A list of members of the Privy Council of Canada is published in Appendix 8, Political update.

3.2.3 The prime minister

The prime minister is the leader of the political party requested by the Governor General to form the government, which almost always means the leader of the party with the strongest representation in the Commons. His position is one of exceptional authority stemming in part from the success of the party at an election. The prime minister chooses his cabinet. When a member of cabinet resigns, the remainder of the cabinet is undisturbed; when the prime minister vacates his office, this act normally carries with it the resignation of the cabinet.

Part of the prime minister's authority lies in his power to recommend dissolution of Parliament. This right, which in most circumstances permits him to precipitate an election, is a source of considerable power both in his dealings with colleagues and with the opposition parties in the house. The prime minister is also responsible for organization of the cabinet and its committees; for the organization and functions of his