

without portfolio, and two types of ministers of state. Ministers of state for designated purposes may head a ministry of state created by proclamation. They are charged with developing new and comprehensive policies in areas of particular urgency and importance and have a mandate determined by the Governor-in-Council. They may have powers, duties and functions and exercise supervision and control of elements of the public service, and may seek parliamentary appropriations to cover the cost of their staff and operations. Other ministers of state may be appointed to assist a departmental minister with his responsibilities. They may have powers, duties and functions delegated to them by the departmental minister, who retains ultimate legal responsibility. All ministers are appointed on the advice of the prime minister by commissions of office issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada, to serve and to be accountable to Parliament as members of the government and for any responsibility that might be assigned to them by law or otherwise.

In Canada, almost all executive acts of the government are carried out in the name of the Governor-in-Council. The cabinet, or a committee of ministers acting as a committee of the Privy Council makes submissions to the Governor General for approval, and he is bound by the constitution in nearly all circumstances to accept them. About 3,973 such orders-in-council were enacted in 1978 compared with 3,746 in 1977. Although some were routine and required little discussion 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. Between 40 and 60 bills are normally considered by cabinet during a parliamentary session. Proposals for 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. The nature and large volume of policy issues to be decided on by cabinet do not lend themselves to discussion by 30 or more ministers. Growing demands on the executive have stimulated delegation of some cabinet functions to its committees.

Cabinet committees provide a forum for thorough study of policy proposals, although the cabinet remains the prime focus of decision-making. Membership of cabinet committees is public but the same rules of secrecy that apply to cabinet deliberations apply to cabinet committees. 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 and a committee of the Privy Council established by statute, the economic development committee, and the social development committee, are exceptions; each 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 July 1980 there were four policy committees: economic development, social development, foreign and defence policy, and government operations. Three committees perform co-ordinating functions: priorities and planning, legislation and house planning, and the Treasury Board.