

from May 1980 to January 1983 are given in Appendix 4.

### 19.2.2 The Privy Council

The Constitution Act, 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 cabinet, an informal committee of the Privy Council composed of ministers, which commands the support of a majority of the House of Commons.

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, former speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada and occasionally other distinguished persons, including members of the royal family, past and present Commonwealth prime ministers and premiers of provinces. 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, for example, on March 27, 1981 to receive the Queen's consent to the marriage of the Prince of Wales, as heir to the Canadian Crown, and Lady Diana Spencer. 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 approval which by convention is given 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.

### 19.2.3 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 to the Governor General 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 own office, as well as the Privy Council office and the federal-provincial relations office; and for the allocation of responsibilities between ministers.

Another source of the prime minister's authority derives from the appointments which he recommends to the Governor General, including privy councillors, cabinet ministers, lieutenant-governors of the provinces, provincial administrators, speakers of the Senate, chief justices of all courts, senators and certain senior executives of the public service. The prime minister also recommends the appointment of a new Governor General to the Sovereign, although this normally follows consultation with the cabinet.

Following are the prime ministers since Confederation, with dates of administrations:

- Rt. Hon. Sir John Alexander Macdonald, July 1, 1867 — November 5, 1873
- Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, November 7, 1873 — October 9, 1878
- Rt. Hon. Sir John Alexander Macdonald, October 17, 1878 — June 6, 1891
- Hon. Sir John Joseph Caldwell Abbott, June 16, 1891 — November 24, 1892
- Rt. Hon. Sir John Sparrow David Thompson, December 5, 1892 — December 12, 1894
- Hon. Sir Mackenzie Bowell, December 21, 1894 — April 27, 1896
- Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, May 1, 1896 — July 8, 1896
- Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, July 11, 1896 — October 6, 1911
- Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Laird Borden, October 10, 1911 — October 12, 1917 (Conservative Administration)
- Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Laird Borden, October 12, 1917 — July 10, 1920 (Unionist Administration)
- Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen, July 10, 1920 — December 29, 1921 (Unionist — National Liberal and Conservative Party)
- Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, December 29, 1921 — June 28, 1926