

Parliament on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Governor General signs orders-in-council, commissions and other state documents, and gives assent to bills that have been passed in both houses of Parliament and which thereby become acts of Parliament with the force of law. In virtually all cases, the Governor General is bound by constitutional convention to carry out these duties in accordance with the advice of the responsible ministers. Should the Governor General not wish to accept their advice, and should they maintain that advice, the 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.

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.

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