

**Recent constitutional developments.** The quickening of federal interest in the North in the 1950s and 1960s stimulated concern and effort to arrange for a resident territorial government and to chart the course of its future development. An amendment to the Northwest Territories Act in 1966 created three new electoral districts in the eastern Arctic and, for the first time, gave elected representation to all residents of the Territories. Also, at the ensuing election the first Eskimo was elected to the territorial Council. A separate consolidated revenue fund was set up for the territorial government and wider powers in other areas of financial administration were introduced.

Meanwhile in 1965 the federal government had appointed an Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories which travelled widely in the North to examine the local needs for change. Following receipt of its recommendations in 1966, the federal government acted quickly to provide for a territorial administration resident in the Northwest Territories. Yellowknife was designated as the seat of territorial government. In June 1970, the federal government passed amendments to the Northwest Territories Act changing the number of elected Council members from seven to 10 and decreasing the number of appointed members from five to four. The amendments also extended the life of Council from three to four years, permitted Council to set its own indemnities and to establish the voting age in territorial elections (now set at 18 years subject to a one-year residence requirement), and reduced the period of federal disallowance of territorial ordinances from two years to one.

**Changes in territorial administration.** Unlike the Yukon Territory, which has had its own public service since the turn of the century, the government of the Northwest Territories, until recently, has been largely dependent on the federal government for staff to implement its legislation and to operate its public services. Until 1963 the Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs was Commissioner, and the Northern Administration Branch of that Department was devoted to operating most government services in the Northwest Territories with federal public servants. In that year a full-time Commissioner was appointed and charged with building up a territorial administration located initially in Ottawa. In September 1967 the Commissioner and about 50 staff members moved to Yellowknife and immediately assumed responsibility for the game management service, municipal affairs, the issuing of all licences, tax collection and the operation of the liquor system (already staffed by territorial contract employees). Operational responsibility for other government services was transferred from federal to territorial control in the Mackenzie District on April 1, 1969, and in the eastern Arctic on April 1, 1970. The territorial government is structured to carry out its administration through four program and four service departments, each under the direction of a senior public servant reporting to one member of the Executive which consists of the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and two Assistant Commissioners. The field staff is organized into four regions with regional directors at Fort Smith, Inuvik, Frobisher Bay and Churchill.

**Present government structure.** The Northwest Territories Act, 1952, as amended, provides for an executive, legislative and judicial structure. The Commissioner is the chief executive officer, appointed by the federal government and responsible for the administration of the Northwest Territories under the direction of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In practice, all major policy decisions are taken on the advice of this Council. The Commissioner can spend funds only to the extent voted by Council and all new revenue measures are subject to Council approval. Normally, the Commissioner obtains prior federal approval of proposed legislative and budgetary measures before submitting them to Council.

The Council of the Northwest Territories consists of 10 elected and four appointed members and has a life of four years. It meets at least twice a year, usually for three weeks at a January session and two weeks at a spring session, but more often if required. The Commissioner presides over Council sessions and the Deputy Commissioner sits as an appointed member. A Clerk of Council and a Legal Adviser provide the main administrative assistance and debates are recorded verbatim.

The Northwest Territories Act gives the territorial Council authority to legislate in most provincial areas of government activity except for natural resources other than game; these are reserved to the federal government which alone can provide the necessary development funds. Legislation must receive three readings and have the assent of the Commissioner; he can reserve assent but this is a rare occurrence and the federal government may disallow any