

On behalf of Her Majesty, the Governor General receives diplomatic envoys from Commonwealth and foreign countries to Canada. He obtains Her Majesty's approval for the appointment of Canadian heads of mission abroad. His Excellency is Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces. He acts as host for heads of state visiting Canada, and he makes visits from coast to coast which entail many public addresses on diverse subjects.

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA No. 12

RP/A

April 28, 1954.

(Revised April 1954)

The Governor General is the representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Canada. The Queen is Canada's Head of State just as she is the Head of State for the United Kingdom and for several other countries freely associated as members of the Commonwealth. The Governor General, as the Queen's representative, performs many governmental functions in Canada, most of which are of a formal character.

The document by which the Queen appoints the Governor General is a Commission of Appointment signed by the Sovereign and countersigned by the Prime Minister of Canada. Under the present practice the Queen accepts the nomination of the Prime Minister of Canada of the appointee to this high office.

The present position of the Governor General reflects the constitutional development of Canada. Prior to attainment of Canada's full autonomy, the Governor General acted under directions from the United Kingdom authorities. Although Canada's constitutional development was a gradual process, her present status as an independent nation resulted from the Imperial Conference of 1926, 1931 and 1952, of which the conclusions were embodied in the Statute of Westminster, 1931. This Statute established that members of the Commonwealth were autonomous communities of equal status and in no way subordinate to one another with respect to domestic or external affairs, united by a common allegiance to the Crown.

While the subsequent twenty-three years have brought still further changes of which the most notable is the continued inclusion of India in the Commonwealth although that nation possesses republican status, the position of the Sovereign and of her representative in the other members of the Commonwealth remains unchanged. Although the principle is firmly established that the Sovereign and the Governor General exercise royal powers on the advice of the Prime Minister who is the spokesman for the Government of Canada, the Crown remains a vital function of Canada's democratic form of government.

Many of the formal functions of the Governor General relate to Parliament. He summons Parliament, opens it by delivering the speech from the Throne, gives royal assent to bills which pass the House of Commons and the Senate, adjourns the sessions and eventually prorogues Parliament.