
the country, with the monarch's formal permission, for up to 30 consecutive days, and in 1969, for example, the Governor General made an official tour of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago; several Governors General have made official visits to Washington. During such absences, and often also while the Governor General is in Canada, his routine duties are performed by one of the deputies specified in the Letters Patent, a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. The Governor General himself, for example, hardly ever attends in person to give royal assent to legislation.

Relation with Prime
Minister

As a head of state aloof from politics, the Governor General, like the monarch, is entitled to be kept fully informed on important governmental matters; he may (depending on the kind of personal relation he has with the Prime Minister) be consulted; and he has the right to caution his chief adviser, who, of course, need not heed any warning. The Right Honourable W.L. Mackenzie King, who held office longer than any other Canadian Prime Minister, left behind a detailed diary that makes it clear that he sometimes talked confidentially with the Governor General when he did not feel free to talk to anyone else. The Governor General's value in this respect can hardly be calculated, and naturally varies with the two individuals involved; in one sense, there are limitations on how useful a Governor General can be to a Prime Minister, for, unlike the monarch, he does not hold a hereditary office for life but an appointive one for a tenure of five to seven years, and may, in fact, if there has been a recent change of Government, have been recommended for the office by the Prime Minister's chief opponent. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that some Prime Ministers have found the Governor General a faithful confidant, while the office generally contributes in countless intangible ways to the maintenance of indefinable beliefs about national unity and the integrity of government.

There are occasions, increasingly rare in Canadian history, when a Governor General intervenes directly in the governmental process. His only major duty that would nowadays be likely to require his participation is that based on the convention that there must always be a Prime Minister. Obtaining a Prime Minister is almost always a routine matter, for every political party has its designated leader, and if the governing party is defeated in an election the Governor General need only turn to the Leader of the Opposition. If, however (as happened in 1894), a Prime Minister dies suddenly or, as is not inconceivable, is accidentally killed, the task of finding his successor may not be so routine. It is also possible that, if a general election returned to the House of Commons three or four parties with almost equal representation, finding a Prime Minister who could command the support of a majority of the House would not be simple.
