

64958703

DOC  
CA1  
EA9  
R12  
ENG  
April  
1971

# REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

Dept. of External Affairs  
Min. des Affaires extérieures  
MAY 20 1971  
RETURN TO DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARY  
RENDRE A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE DU MINISTERE

No. 12  
(April 1971)

## THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Queen Elizabeth II is Queen of Canada. Her Majesty, however, is resident in Britain and the Governor General is appointed by her on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Canada to exercise all the Queen's functions in respect of this country. The Governor General is appointed at the pleasure of the Monarch. The average tenure in the office since Confederation has been about five years.

Up to 1926, the Governor General represented both the Crown and the British Government in Canada. However, the Imperial Conference of that year resulted in a formal statement proclaiming the complete equality in status of the United Kingdom and the Dominions. Since then, the Governor General has acted exclusively as the representative of the Queen in Canada, and holds a position in relation to the administration of public affairs in Canada parallel to that of the Sovereign with respect to the governing of Britain. His status and powers are set forth by the British North America Act and by the Governor General's Letters Patent of 1947.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy, with a clear division between the functions of state and the daily operations of policy-making and government. The Prime Minister, who commands majority support within Parliament, is the head of the Government. The Governor General represents the people of Canada as a whole and is not involved in party politics or political affiliations.

The duties of the Governor General are both constitutional and representational. His constitutional duties may be summarized as those normal functions that make the operations of government legal, the traditional prerogatives of the Crown, and reserve powers that have not been invoked for many years but remain as a check on the possibility of arbitrary action by the political authorities. The Crown, the House of Commons and the Senate together compose the Canadian Parliament, and it is the Governor General who formally convokes, prorogues and dissolves that body. Members of the Privy Council, including the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Ministers, are sworn before him. The Governor General must also give Royal Assent to all bills passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, so that these may have the force of law as Acts of Parliament. He, or his deputy, signs many sorts of state document, including Orders-in-Council, commissions, exequaturs, pardons and the like.