

Departments providing programs and services:

- Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
—the principal link between the federal government and Indian people on legal, treaty and, until recently, constitutional matters, as well as the major provider of services and programs
- Department of National Health and Welfare
—operates an Indian health program, including 400 health facilities
- Department of the Secretary of State
—funds political, social and cultural development activities of some Indian groups
- Department of Justice
—provides legal advice to departments dealing with Indian matters and has a leading role in constitutional discussions
- Ministry of the Solicitor General
—administers the criminal justice system (RCMP, penitentiaries, parole system)
- Ministry of State for Small Business and Tourism
—administers a \$345 million Native Economic Development Fund

Central and co-ordinating agencies:

- Ministry of State for Social Development
—reviews departmental program and legislative proposals where they affect the welfare and social development of Indian people
- Ministry of State for Economic and Regional Development
—co-ordinates policies and programs related to industrial and regional development
- Treasury Board
—approves departmental spending estimates
- Federal-Provincial Relations Office and Office of Aboriginal Constitutional Affairs
—co-ordinates federal participation in the constitutional process and consultations between the federal government and aboriginal peoples

The Indian Act

General concerns

The *Indian Act* presents a paradox for Indian people; it confirms the special status of Indians, but it can also be viewed as a mechanism of social control and assimilation. In *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, Sally Weaver refers to “the century-old ambiguity that