

Duties and responsibilities of the Governor General of Canada

The Governor General is appointed by the reigning Monarch of Britain on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Canada to exercise all the Sovereign's functions in respect of this country. The average tenure of office since Confederation has been about five years.

Since 1926, the Governor General has acted exclusively as the representative of the Sovereign 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.

Twofold responsibilities

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.

In fulfilling these duties, the Governor General acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, the Governor General has the right to be consulted, to encourage and to warn, and he holds regular discussions with the Prime Minister on Government policies in order that he may be kept informed and, if he wishes, offer comments thereon. Moreover, he retains the ultimate constitutional right to replace his advisers should he judge this indispensable for the national good. The last occasion on which the reserve power was used was in 1926, and it would require most unusual circumstances for it to be invoked again.

Among the most significant of the Governor General's constitutional responsibilities is that of ensuring that the country always has a Prime Minister. Indeed, it is the Governor General who formally summons a new Prime Minister to form a Government. By virtue of his position, the Governor

General is also Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces and signs the commissions of all officers. He receives the letters of credence and commission of foreign ambassadors and Commonwealth high commissioners appointed to Canada. He is Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, and conducts the investitures of that Order as well as those of other orders and national bodies.

Ceremonial functions

In addition to his constitutional role, the Governor General has many ceremonial functions that involve travel throughout the nation. These permit him to know the country, to be able to place public issues in perspective and to establish a closer link with the people whom he serves.

The Governor General acts as Canada's host to visiting members of the Royal Family, foreign heads of state and other distinguished visitors. In his residence, and during his travels throughout Canada, he extends hospitality in many forms to great numbers of Canadian citizens and visitors from outside Canada.

As the representative of the Crown in Canada, the Governor General is empowered to exercise all the Sovereign's duties, including travelling abroad on behalf of the Canadian nation.

al process. "Your experience and accomplishments at home and abroad eminently suit you for this role," he said.

"As a diplomat, you have had difficult and demanding assignments; they have been accompanied at times by frustration and disappointment. But you have always carried your diplomatic tasks to success because of your patience and your wisdom. At home, as Under-Secretary of State, you helped to evolve national policies designed to ensure that our two official languages can truly thrive; that our many cultures can truly flourish; that our identity as individuals — and as a nation — can find strength and fulfillment in our arts and culture. These efforts have helped to give Canadians

a greater knowledge of each other, and to give the world a greater knowledge of Canada," Mr. Trudeau stated.

Canada tour first job

The Governor General, in his reply, stated that he would be "honoured to convey...the message of loyalty and affection" to the Queen.

"My wife and I have been deeply touched, Prime Minister, by your most cordial welcome, offered as it was on behalf of all Canadians; for we can succeed in the mission to which we are dedicating ourselves today only in so far as we are able to rely on the support of all, and on the aid of providence. We shall seek out that support among all those who have a hand in

the vast, richly colourful, yet unfinished tapestry that is Canada," he continued.

He and Mrs. Léger would begin their term, he said, by visiting all the provincial capitals.

The concluding paragraphs of the Governor General's remarks follow:

"We have been the first — and in many ways the only — people to be affected in a deep and lasting fashion by the three major currents of contemporary thought and genius: the English, the French and the American. Each in turn has formed and in some respects deformed us. In the past we have had to yield to them because the strength to resist was not forthcoming in a young and scattered people, disunited and hungry for new technology. But