

The Cabinet initiates nearly all public bills placed before the Parliament and, following established precedent, resigns office when it becomes evident that it no longer holds the confidence of the representatives of the people. Its members are chosen by the Prime Minister and each generally assumes charge of one of the various departments of government, although a minister may hold more than one portfolio at the same time, or may be without portfolio.

The Privy Council

The Queen's Privy Council for Canada is composed of about 113 members, who are sworn of the Council by the Governor General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, and who retain their membership for life. The Council consists, chiefly, of present and former ministers of the Crown. It does not meet as a functioning body, and its constitutional responsibilities as adviser to the Crown in respect to Canada are performed exclusively by the ministers who constitute the Cabinet of the day.

The Legislature

The federal legislative authority is vested in the Parliament of Canada, consisting of the Queen, an Upper House styled the Senate, and a Lower House known as the House of Commons. Bills may originate in either the Senate or the House subject to the provisions of Section 53 of the British North America Act, 1867, which provides that bills for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue or the imposition of any tax or impost shall originate in the House of Commons. Bills must pass both Houses and receive the royal assent before becoming law. In practice, most public bills originate in the House of Commons, although there has been a marked increase recently in the introduction of public bills in the Senate. Private bills usually originate in the Senate.

Under Section 91 of the British North America Acts, 1867 - 1960, the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada extends to the following matters: the amendment of the Constitution of Canada subject to certain exceptions; the public debt and property; the regulation of trade and commerce; unemployment insurance; the raising of money by any mode or system of taxation; the borrowing of money on the public credit; postal service; the census and statistics; militia, military and naval service, and defence; the fixing and providing for the salaries and allowances of civil and other officers of the Government of Canada; beacons, buoys, lighthouses, and Sable Island; navigation and shipping; quarantine and the establishment and maintenance of marine hospitals; sea coast and inland fisheries; ferries between a province and any British or foreign country or between two provinces; currency and coinage; banking, incorporation of banks, and the issue of paper money; savings banks; weights and measures; bills of exchange and promissory notes; interest; legal tender; bankruptcy and insolvency; patents of invention and discovery; copyrights; Indians and lands reserved for the Indians; naturalization and aliens; marriage and divorce; the criminal law, except the constitution of courts of criminal jurisdiction, but including the procedure in criminal matters; the establishment, maintenance, and management of penitentiaries; such classes of subjects as are expressly excepted in the enumeration of the classes of subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the legislatures of the provinces.