

II The Government of Canada

1. The Federal Government

The Executive

The Crown

The British North America Act provides that "the Executive Government and authority of and over Canada is hereby declared to continue and be vested in the Queen". The functions of the Crown, which are substantially the same as those of the Queen in relation to the Government of Britain, are generally discharged by the Governor General. A few Canadian prerogative powers, such as the granting of honours and awards and the appointment of ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary, are dealt with by the Queen personally; most are, however, performed on her behalf by the Governor General, and in either case the prerogative power is exercised on the advice of the Government of Canada, in accordance with established principles of responsible government. The practical executive functions of government are exercised by the Cabinet.

Apart from her constitutional position in relation to the various governments of the Commonwealth countries, the Queen is head of the Commonwealth and symbolizes the association of the member countries. Until 1953, the title of the Queen was the same throughout the Commonwealth. Constitutional developments put the title somewhat out of accord with the facts of the position and in December 1952 it was decided by the prime ministers of the Commonwealth countries meeting in London to establish new forms of title for each country. The title for Canada was approved by Parliament and established by a royal proclamation on May 29, 1953. The title of the Queen, so far as Canada is concerned, now is:

"Elizabeth the Second, by the grace of God of the United Kingdom, Canada and her other realms and territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith."

The Governor General

The Governor General, appointed by the Queen, on the advice of the Prime Minister of Canada, traditionally serves for a term of five years, representing the Queen in relation to the Government of Canada and exercising authority under the letters patent constituting the Office of the Governor General, and the provisions of the British North America Acts, 1867 to 1952. Acting under the recommendations of the responsible advisers, the Governor General summons, prorogues and dissolves Parliament and assents to bills and exercises other executive functions.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is a committee of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and is responsible to Parliament. By convention, the members of the Cabinet are members of either the House of Commons or the Senate. Ordinarily, most of the Cabinet members have seats in the House of Commons. At the present time one member of the Cabinet, who is a Minister without Portfolio, is a member of the Senate.