

In addition to official correspondence, there had long been the practice of private and informal correspondence both from the Governor General to individuals in the Colonial Office, and from the Colonial Secretary of State or the Permanent Under-Secretary to the Governor General. Such letters were ordinarily for the latter's private and unofficial information. He exercised his discretion in privately showing these letters, or copies of them, to the Prime Minister, and in a few cases to some other Minister in whom he had confidence. Earl Grey was very frank and candid with Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and sent him, under a handwritten covering note and comment, many of these letters.

Besides passing on the Colonial Office correspondence, it was the habit of various Governors General to correspond personally and privately with the Prime Minister of the day. The degree of intimacy varied considerably. It depended on the Governor General's interest, zeal and degree of frankness; it also depended on the Prime Minister's attitude or experience or lack of experience; and on the working relations and spirit of cooperation between them.

As has been indicated, the correspondence of Earl Grey with Sir Wilfrid Laurier is revealing. They were also close friends. Grey wrote to the Prime Minister almost every day, on every subject of domestic, external or imperial interest. His letters were almost invariably written in long-hand, either in his East Block Office, or at Rideau Hall, or on the train while travelling, or