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THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Queen Elizabeth II is Queen of Canada. Her Majesty, however, is resident in Britain and the Governor General is appointed by her on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Canada to exercise all the Queen's functions in respect of this country. The Governor General is appointed at the pleasure of the Monarch. The average tenure in the office since Confederation has been about five years.

Up to 1926, the Governor General represented both the Crown and the British Government in Canada. However, the Imperial Conference of that year resulted in a formal statement proclaiming the complete equality in status of the United Kingdom and the Dominions. Since then, the Governor General has acted exclusively as the representative of the Queen 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.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy, with a clear division between the functions of state and the daily operations of policy-making and government. The Prime Minister, who commands majority support within Parliament, is the head of the Government. The Governor General represents the people of Canada as a whole and is not involved in party politics or political affiliations.

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, in the words of Walter Bagehot, 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.

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. For example, the present Governor General, up to the end of 1970, had covered 115,700 miles within Canada in the three and a half years since his appointment. His patronage and the support of his office are given to many national organizations, such as the Boy Scouts of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Order of St. John, the Royal Canadian Legion and the Victorian Order of Nurses, and his presence at functions throughout the country offers proof of his interest in the activities of a wide variety of organizations and gatherings. His speeches in Ottawa and elsewhere on national and local occasions, and to organizations and groups of all kinds, offer encouragement and stimulate thought on many important subjects in the national life.

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. In 1928, Lord Willingdon paid an official visit to Washington as the guest of the President. Four of his successors have done the same, the most recent being Mr. Massey in 1954. In 1947, Lord Alexander paid a state visit to Brazil; and in 1969 the present Governor General made an official tour of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Governor General's absences from the country are governed constitutionally by his Letters Patent, which permit him to be out of the country for 30 consecutive days, with the prior formal permission of the

Sovereign, while continuing to exercise the powers of his office. During such absences, as during his trips within Canada, the Governor General appoints the Chief Justice or one of the Justices of the Supreme Court to act as Deputy Governor General.

In short, the Governor General represents the qualities of the Canadian nation and people as an entity, and he has become an important symbol of the unity of the country. His office ensures the continuity of Canada's institutions and functions of state; and his example stimulates the ideals and efforts of all Canadians.

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