



BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND CABINET MINISTERS

Executive Council

The executive branch of government is headed by the Executive Council and made up of the Premier and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the governing party who are appointed to oversee particular ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Education). Executive Council is also commonly referred to as Cabinet. On the recommendation of the Premier, the Executive Council is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor under section 9 of the British Columbia *Constitution Act*.

Cabinet sets priority issues for government and approves policies set by ministries. It approves the regulations and orders-in-council that flesh out the generalized language of laws passed in the Legislative Assembly. Cabinet exercises absolute control over the province's finances. Cabinet also appoints many senior civil servants, board and commission members, Crown corporation directors, and other key public positions.

Much of cabinet business is handled through a committee system. Cabinet Ministers and some private members (MLAs who are not cabinet ministers) sit on various Cabinet committees to set legislative priorities and review bills or they may be focused on particular issues. Cabinet committee recommendations are forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

Cabinet Ministers

Cabinet Ministers are usually MLAs chosen by the Premier to be appointed to act as Ministers of the Crown. They are responsible for the day-to-day activities of individual government ministries and for proposing new laws. The appointment of an MLA to Cabinet is based on his or her ability and expertise and may also be influenced by political considerations such as geographic base, gender and ethnicity.

The Premier may also choose an individual who is not an MLA to be a Cabinet Minister, although this rarely happens. However, the practice is that the Minister then proceeds to obtain a seat in the House at the next available opportunity.

Cabinet Ministers are responsible to the Legislative Assembly which means that they are answerable to the House for their actions and plans. This is known as “responsible government”.



Photo by John Yanyshyn, Visions West

Cabinet Meeting Room