

# THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



## THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The executive branch of government is headed by the Executive Council which is 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). The Executive Council is commonly referred to as the Cabinet. On the recommendation of the Premier, the Executive Council is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor under Section 9 of the provincial *Constitution Act, 1996*.

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's 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 focus on particular issues. Cabinet committee recommendations are forwarded to the rest of Cabinet for approval.

## CABINET MINISTERS

Cabinet ministers are almost always MLAs chosen by the Premier to be appointed as ministers of the Crown. They are responsible for the day to day activities of individual government ministries and for proposing new laws in the Legislative Assembly. The appointment of an MLA to Cabinet is based on their ability and expertise but they 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 Legislative Assembly at the next available opportunity.

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Cabinet ministers are accountable to the Legislative Assembly, which means that they are answerable to MLAs for their actions and plans. This is known as responsible government.

Cabinet ministers also adhere to the principle of collective responsibility. Each minister is expected to take responsibility for and defend all Cabinet decisions. Even if there is disagreement amongst Cabinet members about a decision, once it is made, every Cabinet minister must support and defend it. This principle provides stability within government by uniting the responsibility of individual ministers under the collective responsibility of Cabinet and the Crown.



*The Cabinet Meeting Room in the Parliament Buildings.*

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