An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada: A Comprehensive Overview

The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada, Seventh Edition

by Gerald Baier

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Canada's parliamentary government system is a unique blend of British and French traditions, which has evolved over centuries to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic nation. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the Canadian parliamentary system, covering its history, structure, functions, and key players.

Historical Roots

The origins of Canada's parliamentary system can be traced back to the British Parliament, which emerged in the 13th century. Over time, the British Parliament evolved into a bicameral legislature, consisting of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The House of Commons was

elected by the people, while the House of Lords was composed of hereditary peers.

When Canada became a self-governing dominion in 1867, it adopted a parliamentary system based on the British model. However, there were some important differences between the Canadian and British systems. For example, the Canadian Senate was not an elected body, but rather was appointed by the Governor General. Additionally, the Canadian Prime Minister was not necessarily the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons, but rather was appointed by the Governor General.

Structure of Government

The Canadian parliamentary system is a constitutional monarchy, which means that the monarch (currently Queen Elizabeth II) is the head of state. However, the Queen's powers are largely symbolic, and she does not play an active role in the day-to-day governance of Canada.

The real power in the Canadian parliamentary system lies with the Prime Minister, who is the head of government. The Prime Minister is appointed by the Governor General, and he or she must have the confidence of the House of Commons in order to remain in office.

The Prime Minister leads the Cabinet, which is a group of ministers who are responsible for specific areas of government policy. The Cabinet is responsible for developing and implementing government policy, and it is accountable to the House of Commons.

The Parliament of Canada is the legislative branch of the Canadian government. It is a bicameral legislature, consisting of the House of

Commons and the Senate.

- The House of Commons is the elected chamber of Parliament. It is composed of 338 members, who are elected by the people of Canada.

- The Senate is the appointed chamber of Parliament. It is composed of 105 members, who are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister.

The Parliament of Canada is responsible for passing laws, approving government spending, and overseeing the work of the government.
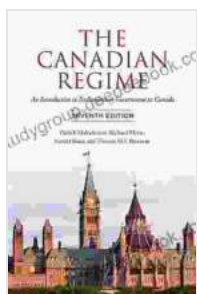
Functions of Government

The Canadian parliamentary system has three main functions:

- **Legislative function:** The Parliament of Canada is responsible for passing laws. Laws are proposed by the government and debated in the House of Commons and the Senate. Once a law has been passed by both chambers of Parliament, it is sent to the Governor General for royal assent.

- **Executive function:** The government is responsible for implementing the laws of Canada. The government is also responsible for managing the country's finances, providing public services, and ensuring the safety and security of Canadians.

- **Judicial function:** The courts of Canada are responsible for interpreting the laws of Canada and resolving disputes. The courts are independent of the government and the Parliament of Canada.

Key Players

There are several key players in the Canadian parliamentary system:

- **Queen Elizabeth II:** The Queen is the head of state of Canada. She is a constitutional monarch, which means that she does not play an active role in the day-to-day governance of Canada.

- **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau:** The Prime Minister is the head of government of Canada. He is appointed by the Governor General and must have the confidence of the House of Commons in order to remain in office.

- **Cabinet:** The Cabinet is a group of ministers who are responsible for specific areas of government policy. The Cabinet is responsible for developing and implementing government policy, and it is accountable to the House of Commons.

- **Governor General Mary Simon:** The Governor General is the representative of the Queen in Canada. He or she is appointed by the Queen on the advice

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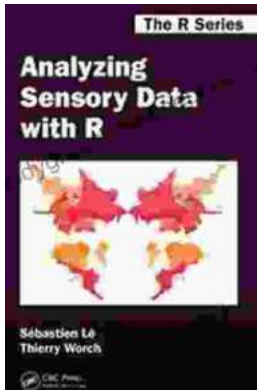
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