

## **Cabinet Committees: A Guide for Departments**

February 2006

### **A) CABINET**

Chaired by the Prime Minister and includes all Ministers (including the Leader of the Government in the Senate). Cabinet and the Cabinet Committee system serve as the Prime Minister's decision making tables and fora for discussion.

#### **Meeting**

- Meets at least once a month, at the call of the Chair
- Meetings take place on Tuesday mornings
- Quorum 4 Ministers

#### **Document Distribution**

- Agenda and Cabinet Documents circulated to Ministers and Deputy Ministers by the Friday before the meeting

#### **Timing**

- Departments are required to submit documents in both official languages to the Cabinet Paper System Unit at PCO at least **3 business days** in advance of each meeting (Cabinet papers include decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, and Memoranda to Cabinet).
- Other supporting documentation is to be submitted to Priorities and Planning (PCO) at least **3 business days** in advance (i.e. Thursday before the Tuesday meeting)

#### **Letters**

- Letters are accepted (via the Chair) from Ministers who are unable to attend and wish to convey their views
- Letters to the Chair should be addressed to the Chair and submitted to PCO in both official languages at least **3 business days** in advance of a meeting to the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet (Priorities and Planning)

#### **Invitations**

- All Ministers are expected to attend in person
- Deputy Ministers to support presenting Ministers (as required, at the invitation of the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Priorities and Planning)

## **B) PRIORITIES AND PLANNING**

- Chair: Prime Minister; Vice-Chair: Minister Cannon (total 11 members)

### **Role**

- Provides strategic direction on government priorities and expenditure management
- Ratifies committee recommendations

### **Meeting**

- Weekly on Tuesday mornings from 9am - 12pm (will be shorter if Cabinet meeting follows)
- Quorum 4 Ministers

### **Document Distribution**

- Agenda circulated to all Ministers and Deputy Ministers
- MCs and CRs that require Priorities and Planning (P&P) approval distributed to all Ministers and Deputy Ministers by the Friday before the meeting
- Discussion material distributed to Member Ministers only

### **Timing**

- Departments are required to submit documents in both official languages to the Cabinet Paper System Unit at PCO at least **3 business days** in advance of each Committee meeting (includes decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, and Memoranda to Cabinet). Documents are to be signed off by the Minister or Ministers, when required
- Modification of deadlines for documents will be on an exceptional basis

### **Letters**

- Letters are accepted (via the Chair) from Ministers who are unable to attend and on occasion, from non-Member Ministers who wish to express their views on a specific issue
- Letters to the Chair should be addressed to the Chair and submitted to PCO in both official languages at least **3 business days** in advance of a meeting to the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet (Priorities and Planning)

### **Ratification**

- Priorities and Planning Committee will ratify all policy committee recommendations. Cabinet can also take decisions and ratify committee recommendations

### **Invitations**

- All Members are expected to attend in person
- Non-member Ministers invited to participate in discussions relevant to their portfolios at the discretion of the Chair
- Invited Ministers have the option for attending the entire meeting at the discretion of the Chair.
- Deputy Ministers to support presenting Ministers (as required, at the invitation of the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Priorities and Planning)

### **Linkages to other Committees**

- Chair of Operations Committee to report in to Priorities and Planning on a regular basis
- Priorities and Planning to provide strategic direction to policy committees on priority issues and to ratify committee recommendations.

## **C) OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (OPS):**

- Chair: Minister Prentice, and Vice-Chair: Minister Nicholson (total 11 Members)

### **Role**

- The Committee is responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the Government's agenda, issues management, legislation and house planning and communications.

### **Meetings**

- Weekly on Mondays from 3:30-6:00pm.
- Can be called to meet at other times face to face or via secure teleconference in the event of an emergency or quickly evolving issues that require a Committee decision.
- Quorum 4 Ministers

### **Document Distribution**

- Agenda circulated to all Ministers and Deputy Ministers
- Distribution of Cabinet Papers is assessed on a case by case basis.

### **Timing**

- Departments are required to submit documents in both official languages, signed off by the Minister or Ministers, as the case may be, to the Cabinet Paper System Unit at PCO at least **5 business days** in advance of each Committee meeting. Such documents include decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, and Memoranda to Cabinet.
- The agenda for each meeting is finalized and issued by PCO. Agenda items will consist of those proposals ready for discussion and submitted by deadline.
- Modification of deadlines for documents will be on an exceptional basis
- An overhead presentation (e.g. Powerpoint) by the sponsoring Minister(s) on the key issues may be used and is encouraged. These presentations must be based on the circulated Cabinet Papers (decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, Memoranda to Cabinet) and projected in both official languages. A dry run of an overhead presentation is essential and must be scheduled with the PCO Cabinet Paper System Unit **2-3 business days** in advance as dry runs are scheduled between Cabinet Committee meetings.

### **Letters**

- Letters to the Chair should be submitted in both official languages, addressed to the Chair but sent care of PCO (to the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet (Operations)) at least **2 business days** in advance of a meeting.

## **Invitations**

- All Members are expected to attend in person
- Sponsoring Ministers will be invited as required for agenda items.
- The Deputy (or the ADM designate) of the sponsoring Minister attends.
- Other Ministers may be invited to participate in discussions relevant to their portfolios at the discretion of the Chair

## *Additional Official*

- Departments can request that one additional departmental official wait in the ante-room (outside the Cabinet room) while their Minister is presenting an agenda item.
- If the presenting Minister is using overheads, the department is to provide a technician (clicker) to run the presentation. This technician (clicker) will have been the same individual to have participated in a dry run of the presentation, as noted earlier

*Officials should be available throughout the meeting, regardless of when their Minister's item is scheduled, as the agenda could be re-organized.*

## **Ratification and Reporting**

- Where the Committee reaches a formal recommendation on an agenda item, a Committee Recommendation (CR) will be issued by PCO. Such CRs will proceed as appropriate to P&P or Cabinet for ratification (provided a source of funds has been secured, etc).

## **Communications**

- There should be no public communication of a Committee Recommendation until all necessary authorities have been obtained, including ratification by Priorities and Planning and/or Cabinet and if required Treasury Board.
- All Communication activities must be coordinated with PCO/PMO Communications.

## **D) POLICY COMMITTEES**

### **i) Social Affairs Committee (SAC)**

- Chair: Minister Clement, Vice-Chair: Minister Finley (total 9 members)

#### **Role**

- Considers health care, justice, Aboriginal, training and skills development, culture and immigration policy issues.

#### **Meeting**

- Tuesdays from 3:30-6:00pm
- Quorum 4 Ministers
- While Policy Committees are assigned a regular time slot by the Prime Minister, they will only meet as needed

### **ii) Economic Affairs Committee (EAC):**

Chair: Minister Flaherty, Vice-Chair: Minister Emerson (total 10 members)

#### **Role**

Considers economic growth, international trade, sustainable development, natural resources, fisheries, agriculture, energy, transport, infrastructure and communities, and regional development policy issues

#### **Meeting**

- Wednesdays from 3:30-6:00pm
- Quorum 4 Ministers
- While Policy Committees are assigned a regular time slot by the Prime Minister, they will only meet as needed

### **iii) Foreign Affairs and National Security Committee (FANS):**

Chair: Minister MacKay, Vice-Chair: Minister Day (total 8 members)

#### **Role**

- Considers foreign affairs, international development, security and defence policy issues

#### **Meeting**

- Thursdays from 3:30-6:00pm
- Quorum 4 Ministers
- While Policy Committees are assigned a regular time slot by the Prime Minister, they will only meet as needed

## All Policy Committees

### Timing

- PCO establishes a forward agenda for the Committee, in consultation with Departments which forms the basis for planning each meeting.
- PCO ensures due process, interdepartmental meetings and consultations are held for all documents including the Parliamentary Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.
- Departments must invite a representative from the appropriate PCO Policy Secretariat, Legislation and House Planning and Communications and Consultations Secretariats for interdepartmental consultations.
- Departments are required to submit documents in both official languages, signed off by the Minister or Ministers, as the case may be, to the Cabinet Paper System Unit at PCO at least **5 business days** in advance of each Committee meeting. Such documents include decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, and Memoranda to Cabinet.
- The agenda for each meeting is finalized and issued by PCO. Agenda items will consist of those proposals ready for discussion and submitted by deadline.
- Ministers and senior officials will receive Cabinet documents from PCO prior to each meeting **3-4 business days** in advance.
- An overhead presentation (e.g. Powerpoint) by the sponsoring Minister(s) on the key issues may be used and is encouraged. These presentations must be based on the circulated Cabinet Papers (decks, aide-mémoires, discussion papers, Memoranda to Cabinet) and projected in both official languages. A dry run of an overhead presentation is essential and must be scheduled with the PCO Cabinet Paper System Unit **2-3 business days** in advance as dry runs are scheduled between Cabinet Committee meetings.

### Letters

- Letters to the Chair should be submitted to PCO in both official languages at least **one business day** in advance of the meeting. Letters and correspondence to the Chair should be addressed to the Chair, but sent care of PCO to the appropriate Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet.

### Ratification

- Where the Committee reaches a formal recommendation on an agenda item, a Committee Recommendation (CR) will be issued by PCO. Such CRs will proceed as appropriate to P&P or Cabinet for ratification (provided a source of funds has been secured, etc).

**Invitations:**

- All Members are expected to attend in person
- Sponsoring Ministers will be invited as required for agenda items
- Other Ministers may be invited to participate in discussions relevant to their portfolios at the discretion of the Chair
- For Policy Committees, joint meetings can occur where required (e.g. Social and Economic Affairs or Foreign Affairs and National Security)

**Attendees***during an agenda item:*

- One official from each sponsoring department is permitted for each item, as a resource (normally the Deputy or the ADM)
- One official from both Finance and Treasury Board Secretariat to ensure linkages to fiscal and administrative implementation
- A Justice official attends if the agenda item has significant legal dimension

*Additional Official:*

- Departments can request that one additional departmental official wait in the ante-room (outside the Cabinet room) while their Minister is presenting an agenda item.
- If the presenting Minister is using overheads, the department is to provide a technician (clicker) to run the presentation. This technician (clicker) will have been the same individual to have participated in a dry run of the presentation, as noted earlier.

*Officials should be available throughout the meeting, regardless of when their Minister's item is scheduled, as the agenda could be re-organized.*

**Communications**

- There should be no public communication of a Committee Recommendation until all necessary authorities have been obtained, including ratification by Priorities and Planning and/or Cabinet and if required Treasury Board.
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## **E) PCO PRE-BRIEFS AND DEBRIEFS**

### **i) Pre-Briefs**

- Central agencies:

SAC / EAC / FANS: review central agency “bottom lines” before a Committee meeting

### **ii) Debriefs**

Weekly Meetings:

- ADM Policy Forum (PCO hosts a weekly meeting of ADMs to give a debrief of the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees that took place during the week and provide a scan ahead. This is also a forum where wider policy discussions and presentations take place.
- Cabinet Liaison (PCO hosts a weekly meeting of Cabinet Liaison representatives to give a debrief of the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees decisions and provide an overview of the week ahead).
- Parliamentary Affairs Interdepartmental (PCO hosts a weekly meeting of Parliamentary Affairs representatives to give a debrief of the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees decisions on Parliamentary and legislative matters and provide an overview of the week ahead.)

*Debriefs will be confined to the essential information needed to advance the policy work to deliver the Government’s agenda. Standard rules for protection of Cabinet confidences will apply to all debriefs.*