# Associations of Parliamentary and Legislative Counsel in Canada

In Canada, parliamentary and legislative services are generally divided between two groups of counsel. *Parliamentary counsel* serve parliamentary institutions (Senate, House of Commons and Legislative Assemblies of the Provinces and Territories). *Legislative counsel* serve the executive branch of government, usually as part of a Department of Justice or Ministry of the Attorney General. For example, at the federal level, the Offices of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the Senate and the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons serve the legislative branch. The Public Law and Legislative Services Branch of the Department of Justice serves the executive (Government of Canada). However, at the provincial and territorial level, some offices, such as the Ontario Office of Legislative Counsel (which is part of the Ministry of the Attorney General), serve both branches.

In Canada two associations support parliamentary counsel and legislative counsel: the Association of Parliamentary Counsel in Canada (founded in 1982) and the Association of Legislative Counsel in Canada (founded in 1994). The associations are not incorporated, but operate on the basis of a set of Organizational Principles and Guidelines adopted on September 13, 2013.

Each association consists of an executive composed of a president and secretary elected annually by the heads of each of the federal, provincial and territorial parliamentary and legislative counsel offices in Canada.

The principal activity of the associations is a joint annual conference usually held in August to promote cooperation between parliamentary and legislative counsel and to discuss issues of common interest. The location of the conference rotates among the capital cities of the 14 jurisdictions (federal, 10 provinces and 3 territories). The presidents and secretaries are responsible for organizing the conferences in conjunction with the host jurisdiction.

The conferences are attended by the heads of offices, their delegations and any others as the presidents determine. Discussions and presentations are confidential, but Chatham House rules apply. The permission of the authors of papers is required to attribute or quote papers distributed at the conference.