

Les États canadiens comparés

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The Core Executive in the Provinces of Canada

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■ INTRODUCTION

In March 2009, and thanks to the collaboration of the Quebec Ministère du Conseil exécutif (Executive Council Office), the members of the network of government secretariats (an association of the representatives of the provincial Executive Council Offices and Premiers' Offices¹) were invited to fill out a monograph on the subject of the organization and practices of the core executive. The data, which were gathered in summer 2009, covered such topics as:

- the budget and staff of Executive Council support organizations;
- central ministries;
- ministerial committees;
- cross-ministerial rules framing governance-related operations;
- executive council operating rules;
- relations between political and administrative leaders.

The data thus compiled have been used to describe and compare the modes of organization and the practices of the core executive. Specifically, in follow-up to research on the subject by Donald Savoie,² a focus of analysis consisted in determining whether a phenomenon similar to the centralization of powers by the Federal Prime Minister can be seen occurring at the provincial level. To that end, ten comparison tables were developed on the basis of the monographs to deal with:

- the operating rules and procedures of the Executive Council, coupled with ministerial committees;
- the organization and size of central ministries and agencies;
- senior public servants and the relations between political and administrative leaders.

■ **The Executive Council and ministerial committees: organization and operations**

The institutionalization of the core executive appears in a set of rules designed to make the activities of the Executive Council more predictable and, to a certain extent, more effective. Concerning this council, it is also worth noting that in some provinces there is a ministerial committee (often referred to as a “Priorities Committee”) that plays the role of an inner cabinet – in other words, a circle of the Premier’s most influential ministers.

¹ Partial data concerning the federal government are displayed (in tables 2, 3 and 4) in order to highlight the differences and similarities between levels of government. It nevertheless remains that the provincial levels remains the main focus of the comparative analysis.

² In particular, the work entitled *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Table 1: Council of Ministers operating rules and practices, January 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Existence of a formal brief submission mechanism	Yes	NP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Frequency of meetings	W 1)	NP	W	W	W	W 2)	W	W	W	W 3)
Existence of an Inner Cabinet	Yes	NP	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

W: weekly

NP: not provided

1) No meetings held in summer

2) Weekly meetings only when the Legislative Assembly is in session

3) Weekly meetings only when the Legislative Assembly is in session, for a total of 30 meetings per year

In all the provinces that provided data, with the exception of British Columbia, the findings show that the operations of the Council of Ministers are framed by a set of rules, particularly respecting the submission of briefs. What is more, Councils of Ministers now meet on a regular basis and not on a casual basis as was the case prior to the institutionalization of the core executive. Furthermore, only Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and British Columbia do not make a distinction between the Council of Ministers (i.e., the entire group of ministerial political leaders) and an inner cabinet responsible for setting priorities.

Issues pertaining to the rules of the core executive to one side, the existence of permanent ministerial committees also testifies to the institutionalization of the core executive.

Table 2: Number of permanent ministerial committees, January 2009

NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	Federal
5	3	2	2	7	8	4	4	8	8	7

The *raison d'être* of these committees, which have been implemented in all provinces since the 1970s, is to facilitate the coordination of government activities. Accordingly, the bigger the province and the provincial public administration are, the greater the number of these committees is. However, size is not the only factor influencing the number of committees, as it is also important to take into consideration the conception of the role of the state held by the government in power as well as a range of factors associated with current trends.

▪ **Central ministries and agencies**

Central ministries carry out the tasks specific to the general administration of government. Their main activities come under four headings:

- the organization of government;
- the definition and dissemination of policy directions;
- the management of financial and budgetary resources, including defining the set of mechanisms surrounding accountability and budget control;
- the internal regulation involved in managing public administration resources other than financial and budgetary resources – namely, human, informational and material resources for the most part.

In all provinces, no more than six entities handle these activities:

- the Premier’s Office;
- the Executive Council (Ministry);
- the Ministry of Finance;
- the Treasury Board Secretariat;
- the Public Service Commission;
- a structure (with or without the status of ministry) for the pooling of resources and obtaining economies of scale at time of consumption.

The apportioning of responsibilities between these six bodies varies from one province to another and according to the status of the entity involved (i.e., full-fledged ministry or a unit within a ministry). For comparison purposes, Table 3 has grouped together the activities associated with the organization of government and the definition and dissemination of policy directions under the heading of “Decision-making Process”. Concerning the activities associated with the internal regulation of resources, comparison has been narrowed down to the question of whether or not there is a structure for pooling resources and obtaining economies of scale at time of consumption. If such a structure does exist, the internal regulation is centralized. If not, the internal regulation is then considered as decentralized and not handled by a central ministry.

Table 3: Configuration of the division of responsibilities within the core executive, January 2009

Activities	Scenario	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	Federal
Decision-making process	PO in EC	x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x
	EC in PO										x	
	EC and PO separate				x (1)		x (1)					
Financial and budgetary resource management	TB in MF	x			x		x	x	x		x	
	MF in TB											
	MF and TB separate			x(2)		x				x		x
	MF and TB integrated		x(3)									
Internal regulation	Centralized	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x
	Decentralized		x	x				x				

PO: Premier's Office; EC: Executive Council; TB: Treasury Board; MF: Ministry of Finance

According to provinces' 2008-2009 expenditure budgets

(1) The Premier's Office is budgetarily - but not politically - distinct from the Executive Council Office (as the Premier is the President of the Executive Council).

(2) The Treasury and Policy Board (TPB) comes under the Executive Council in terms of budget but is politically distinct (as the president of the TPB is not the Premier).

(3) The Provincial Treasurer assumes the duties and responsibilities of both the Minister of Finance and Chair of the Treasury Board.

As of January 2009, two provinces, Quebec and Alberta, had a mode of organization for the core executive similar to that of the federal government – i.e., a Treasury Board that is, in terms of budget and political leadership, distinct from the Ministry of Finance, as well as a Executive Council Ministry to which the resources of the Premier's Office are allocated and whose leader is the Premier. In six provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia), the support functions associated with the Treasury Board (or its equivalent) are integrated into the Ministry of Finance. As of January 2009, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia presented modes of operation having no equivalent in the other provinces.

Once the entities of the core executive have been identified, it is possible to measure their size on the basis of their budgetary resources. A basis is thus provided for taking into consideration the extent of centralization affecting the core executive, starting from the assumption that the greater the budgetary resources dedicated to the core executive are, the more the core executive is centralized.

Table 4: Budget of the core executive, according to the Budgets Estimates (x \$1000), 2008-2009³

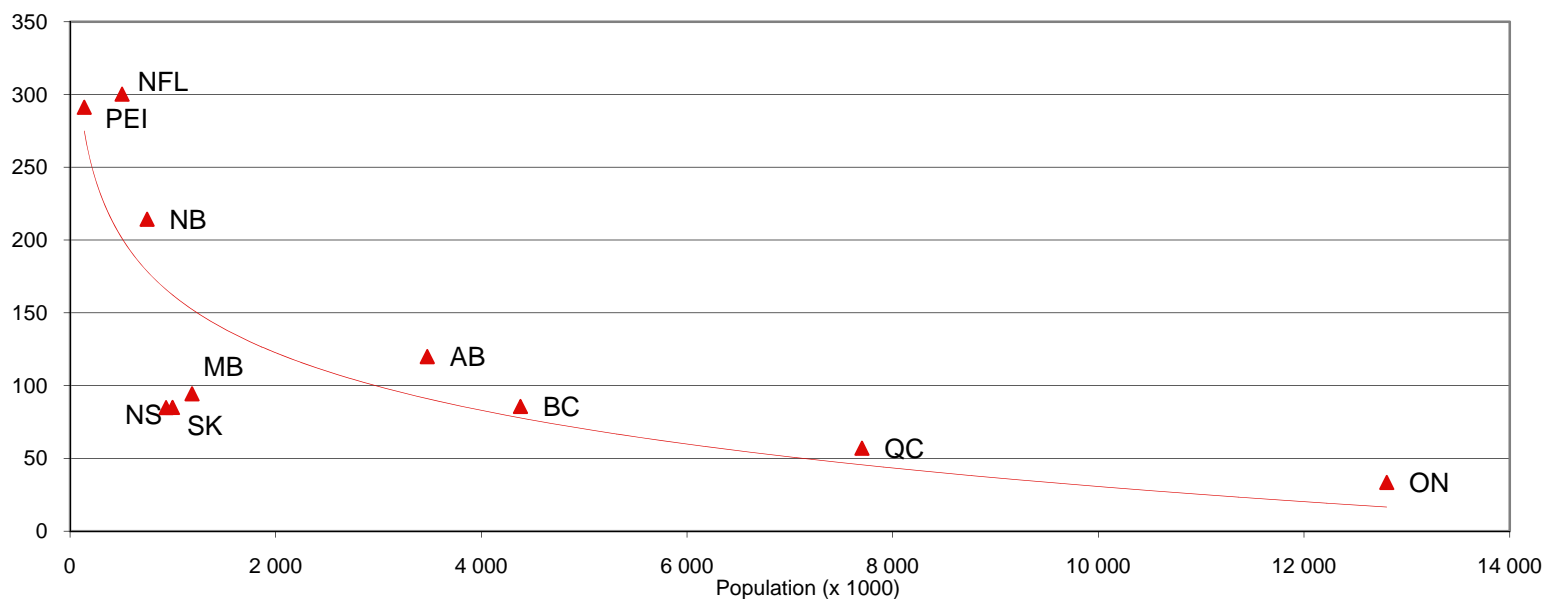
	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	Federal
Decision-making process	10,371	3,416	1,461	3,676	71,325	33,870	2,834	8,716	30,080	9,861	128,782*
Financial and budgetary resource management	36,885	37,061	33,463	17,449	163,213	208,310	102,899	24,877	137,604	143,963	
Other government activities	104,632		44,396	139,523	204,358	186,398	6,235	51,142	248,847	221,545	
Amount	151,887	40,477	79,320	160,648	438,896	428,578	111,967	84,735	416,531	375,369	
Population (x 1000)	506	139	934	750	7,701	12,804	1,187	997	3,474	4,380	
Public sector employees (x 1000)	58	17	119	84	776	1,172	158	136	306	373	
Per capita expenditures (in \$) for the core executive	300	291	85	214	57	33	94	85	120	86	

Source for data on population and public sector employment: ESTAT, Tables 051-0001 and 183-0002

* 2009-2010 budget of the Privy Council Office includes \$48 M for the Premier's Office

³ The breakdown of the data appearing in Table 4 is provided in an appendix. Caution should be exercised when interpreting these results, however, considering that: (1) some ministries or agencies that are not identified as central ministries (in particular, shared service centres) handle activities relating to the core executive; and (2) the missions of central ministries occasionally include activities that are decentralized (in other words, come under the auspices of ministries or agencies that are not a central ministry) or that involve relations with citizens (for example, the delivery of permits).

Chart 1: Per capita expenditures (in \$) of the core executive, 2008-2009



The data appearing in Table 4 and Chart 1 provide evidence of a strong correlation ($r= 0.813$) between the size of the province (based on population) and the scale of the core executive, with the three least heavily populated provinces (Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick) being those in which per capita expenditures of the core executive are the highest, whereas the two most heavily populated provinces (Ontario and Quebec) are those in which such expenditures are lowest. The argument of increasing returns of scale might explain the relationship between province size (population) and scale of the core executive. The problem with this type of measurement is that it provides an incomplete account of the phenomenon of centralization.

In point of fact, this phenomenon stems less from the growth of central ministries and agencies than from the administrative practices aimed at coordinating the action of ministers and senior public servants. In view of this fact, the following tables deal with the relations between political and administrative leaders in the ten provinces of Canada.

- **Senior public servants**

In each of Canada's provinces, with the exception of Alberta, the appointment of the highest administrative officials is a prerogative of the government (or the Lieutenant-Governor in Council). Thus, these leaders are appointed at the discretion of the government and its leader,

the Premier. Alberta is the only province in which the exercise of this prerogative is framed by a set of administrative rules that require the persons in charge of the appointment process – principally the deputy minister to the Premier – to justify their choice. It nevertheless remains that in all provinces, including Alberta, the deputy minister to the Premier (also referred to as Cabinet Secretary, or again as “Clerk of / Secretary to the Executive Council” in some provinces) plays an active role in identifying candidates for the positions of deputy ministers. He or she thus supplements the role played by the Premier’s Office in the appointment process applying to senior public servants.

Table 5: Appointment procedure applying to deputy ministers, January 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Authority responsible	Premier	NP	Premier	Premier	Premier	Premier	Premier	Premier	PSC	Premier
Role of Cabinet Secretary	Advises Premier	NP	Advises Premier	Advises Premier	Advises Premier	Advises Premier	Advises Premier	Advises Premier	Participates directly in recruitment	Advises Premier
Prerogative of the Executive Council	Validates the selection process	NP	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process	Validates the selection process
Prerogative of Minister	Is consulted by the Premier	NP	...	Is consulted by the Premier	Is consulted by the Premier	...	Is consulted by the Premier

"Premier" means either the Premier or, formally, the Executive Council upon the proposal of the Premier; "Cabinet Secretary" also refers to such equivalents as Clerk of / Secretary to the Executive Council

PSC: Public Service Commission. Recruitment for deputy ministers positions is carried out in accordance with the principles of the Alberta *Public Service Act*.

The Corporate Human Resources Department organizes the recruitment process through a specialized agency known as Executive Search.

NP: not provided

The Premier plays a prominent role in the appointment of senior public servants, thus leading one to think that appointment criteria are political in nature. However, in all Canadian provinces, the principle of the political neutrality of senior public servants is recognized. To aid in elucidating this apparent paradox, the data in Tables 6 and 7 bring out that:

- the positions of assistant deputy ministers and their equivalents⁴ are filled in four provinces (New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta) according to administrative criteria that require the officials in charge of appointments to justify their choices;
- the great majority of appointees to the position of deputy minister hail from the provincial public services (or other units of the public administration) in which their career paths are framed by the application of the merit principle.

Table 6: Appointment procedure applying to assistant deputy ministers and their equivalents, January 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Authority responsible	Premier*	NP	NP	MRH	Premier*	Executive Development Committee	NP	PSC	PSC	NP
Role of CS	Is consulted by the Premier	NP	NP	Minor	Is consulted by the Premier	Participates directly in selection process as does the DP concerned	NP	Participates directly in recruitment	Participates directly in recruitment	NP
Administrative criterion	No	NP	NP	Yes, but with possibility of special dispensation	No, but the ministers and indeed the DMs are consulted	Yes	NP	Yes	Yes	NP

CS: Cabinet Secretary; DM: Deputy Minister; MHR: Minister of Human Resources

NP: not provided

* Procedure identical to that applying to DMs

⁴ The official title and status of these positions varies from one province to another. More generally speaking, these positions are held by people whose only immediate superior is the deputy minister.

Table 7: Sector of origin of deputy ministers (in %), January 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB (2)	BC
Provincial public service	65	NP	72	65	93 (1)	67	NA	55	NA	80
Elsewhere in the public administration	9	NP	11	8	7	15	NA	35	NA	10
Private sector	17	NP	11	15	0	18	NA	5	NA	10
Political career	9	NP	6	12	0	0	NA	5	NA	0

NA: not available

NP: not provided

(1) In 2009, 50% of Quebec Deputy Ministers worked in the ministry to which they had been assigned prior to being appointed Deputy Minister.

(2) In 2008-09, all vacant Deputy Minister positions were filled through an internal recruitment process in Alberta's public service

In most provinces, the Cabinet Secretary plays a major role in determining the expectations regarding deputy ministers. To a large extent, his or her coordinating power grows out of this prerogative. The exception on this point is Newfoundland and Labrador, where the ministers are the ones who determine the expectations regarding their deputy ministers.

Table 8: Contractual relations between the Premier, Cabinet Secretary, ministers and deputy ministers, 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Persons responsible for defining expectations toward DMs	Ministers, within framework of government-wide policy	NP	CS	Premier	CS	CS	Premier and ministers	CS	Contract applying to CS, the minister and the DM	CS
Mode of evaluation of results	Integrated into the government entities' Activities Plans	NP	On a case-by-case basis	Sometimes quantified, but most often determined on a case-by-case basis	Absence of quantification, general expectations apply to all DMs	Quantitative and qualitative	Absence of quantification	Varies according to ministry and agency	According to terms and conditions of performance contract	Through the annual employee evaluation and planning process
Salary of a DM (in \$)	104,794 – 142,928	NP	137,600 – 189,200	130,988 – 172,666	139,942 – 195,840	189,850 – 216,900	NA	137,300 – 237,700	264,600 (only salary)	299,200*
Maximum incentive bonus (in % of salary)	None in 2009	NP	189 200 is a maximum. Below this amount, a bonus is possible	None from 2008 to 2010 even if an incentive pay plan exists	10%	Yes, but determined on a case-by-case basis	NA	None	30% (but none in 2009-2010)	10%
Formalization of division of responsibilities between the Minister and the Deputy Minister	Yes, the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> and the <i>Executive Council Act</i>	NP	No	Yes, the Minister's Handbook	Yes, by the <i>Public Service Act</i> and by each Ministry's Act	Yes	No	No	No	Yes, by the <i>Interpretation Act</i>

* A maximum amount
 NP: not provided; NA: not available
 CS: Cabinet Secretary; DM: Deputy Minister

The average length of term of office is one of the indicators of the inclination to opt for a corporate, government-wide approach to managing the senior public service (i.e., an approach in which authority relations and responsibilities are clearly defined). The shorter the term is, the more one may suppose that the government is concerned about developing a comprehensive vision (as opposed to a sectoral vision) among these administrative leaders.

Table 9: Average length of term of office of a deputy minister (in years), 2009

NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
NP	NP	3	3	2.5	2	NP	NP	NP	2

NP: not provided

For the five provinces that provided data on this subject, the length of appointment was, as of winter 2009, rather short (three years and under).

In their support capacity to ministerial committees, the community of deputy ministers, under the leadership of the Cabinet Secretary, may be institutionalized to varying degrees.

Table 10: Community of deputy ministers, 2009

	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Institutionalization	2	NP	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3*
Leadership	CS	NP	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS

Level 0 of institutionalization: community is non-existent

Level 1: community meets but internal structure is limited (i.e., ad hoc creation of sub-groups according to the government's agenda)

Level 2: community is structured into sub-components but has no power of recommendation

Level 3: community is structured and puts forward recommendations to the Executive Council

* The Deputy Ministers' Policy Secretariat is integrated into the Premier's Office and advises the latter

NP: not provided; CS: Cabinet Secretary

On this score, British Columbia stands out as an exception, owing to the recommendation-making role played by the Deputy Ministers' Policy Secretariat in relation to the Executive Council and the ministerial committees.

APPENDIX: DETAILS OF TABLE 4

» NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Office of the Executive Council	18,315.4
	Intergovernmental Affairs	-287.3
	Ottawa Office	-362.2
	Rural Secretariat	-1,489.0
	Womens' Policy	-4,305.7
	Research & Development Policy	-1,500.0
	Total	10,371.2
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Finance, Financial Administration	34,760.6
	Minister's Office	+340.8
	General Administration	+1,783.2
	Total	36,884.6
Other centralized government activities	Office of the CIO	65,612.1
	Public Service Secretariat	+11,879.5
	Government Services	+36,037.8
	Health & Safety	-4,951.0
	Consumer and Commercial Affairs	-3,946.9
	Total	104,631.5

» PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council	3,791.3
	Intergovernmental Affairs	-375.3
	Total	3,416.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Provincial Treasury	+34,760.6
	Technology Asset Management	+2,300.0
	Total	37,060.6
Other centralized government activities	None	

» NOVA-SCOTIA

ACTIVITÉS	LIGNES BUDGÉTAIRES	MONTANT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Office of the Premier	857.0
	Executive Council	+604.0
	Total	1,461.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Finance	29,871.0
	Treasury and Policy Board	+3,592.0
	Total	33,463.0
Other centralized government activities	Public Service Commission	20,548.0
	Communications Nova Scotia	+23,848.0
	Total	44,396.0

»» NEW BRUNSWICK

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council Office	1,956.0
	Office of the Premier	+1,720.0
	Total	3,676.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Department of Finance	12,793.0
	Office of the Comptroller	+4,656.0
	Total	17,449.0
Other centralized government activities	Department of Supply and Services (ordinary account)	109,138.0
	Office of Human Resources	+5,838.0
	Communications New Brunswick	+2,709.0
	Service New Brunswick, chief provider of front-line services to the public	+21,838.0
	Total	139,523.0

» QUEBEC

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Support for the Premier and the Conseil exécutif (Executive Council)	71,324.6
	Total	71,324.6
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Ministère des Finances, Direction du Ministère (Ministry of finance, head office)	45,076.6
	Ministère des Finances, Politiques budgétaires et fiscales, analyses économiques et direction des activités financières et comptables du gouvernement (Budgetary and fiscal policy, economic analyses, and government financial and accounting activities)	+118,136.1
	Total	163,212.7
Other centralized government activities	Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor (Treasury board secretariat)*	100,870.8
	Commission de la fonction publique (Public service commission)	+3,484.0
	Services gouvernementaux (Government services)	+100,003.4
	Total	204,358.2

* A portion of the funding provided to the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor is granted for activities associated with financial and budgetary resources management.

▶▶ ONTARIO

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council	30,917.5
	Office of the Premier	+2,952.5
	Total	33,870.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Ministry of Finance, Administration	138,856.2
	Ministry of Finance, Tax Policy and Budget Operations	+69,454.1
	Total	208,310.3
Other centralized government activities	Ministry of Government Services, Administration	75,312.6
	Ministry of Government Services, Human Resources Division	+66,589.8
	Ministry of Government Services, Centre for Leadership and Learning	+33,081.9
	Ministry of Government Services, Modernization program	+11,413.4
	Total	186,397.7

»» MANITOBA

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council, Operating Expenses	2,833.5
	Total	2,833.5
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Finances, Appropriations not Statutory to be Voted	102,898.7
	Total	102,898.7
Other centralized government activities	Civil Service Commission	6,235.0
	Total	6,235.0

»» SASKATCHEWAN

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council	8,716.0
	Total	8,716.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Finance, Operating Expenses	43,838.0
	Revenue	-18,961.0
	Total	24,877.0
Other centralized government activities	Government Services	13,450.0
	Public Service Commission	+37,692.0
	Total	51,142.0

» ALBERTA

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Executive Council	30,080.0
	Total	30,080.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Finances	348,927.0
	Enterprises	-36,687.0
	Teachers' Pre-1992 Pensions	-243,000.0
	Treasury Board*	+68,364.0
	Total	137,604.0
Other centralized government activities	Services Alberta, Service to Government	248,847.0
	Total	248,847.0

* A portion of the funding provided to the Treasury Board is granted for activities associated with human resources management (under the heading of "Other government activities").

» BRITISH COLUMBIA

ACTIVITIES	BUDGET HEADING	AMOUNT (X 000 \$)
Decision-making process	Office of the Premier	14,102.0
	Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat	-4,241.0
	Total	9,861.0
Management of financial and budgetary resources	Ministry of Finances	143,963.0
	Total	143,963.0
Other centralized government activities	Ministry of Labour and Citizen's Services, Services to the Public Sector	170,735.0
	Ministry of Labour and Citizen's Services, Governance	+30,595.0
	Ministry of Labour and Citizen's Services, Executive and Support Services	+20,215.0
	Total	221,545.0