

# How a Government Bill Becomes Law

## (Pre-Legislative Stages)

### Legislative Library of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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This guide explains the pre-legislative stages of the process by which a typical government-initiated bill becomes law and is one of a number of resources from the Library about the making and passing of laws in Ontario. View also the others:

[How a Government Bill Becomes Law](#)

[How a Private Member's Public Bill Becomes Law](#)

[How a Committee Bill Becomes Law](#)

[How a Private Bill Becomes Law](#)

[When do Ontario Acts and Regulations come into Force?](#)

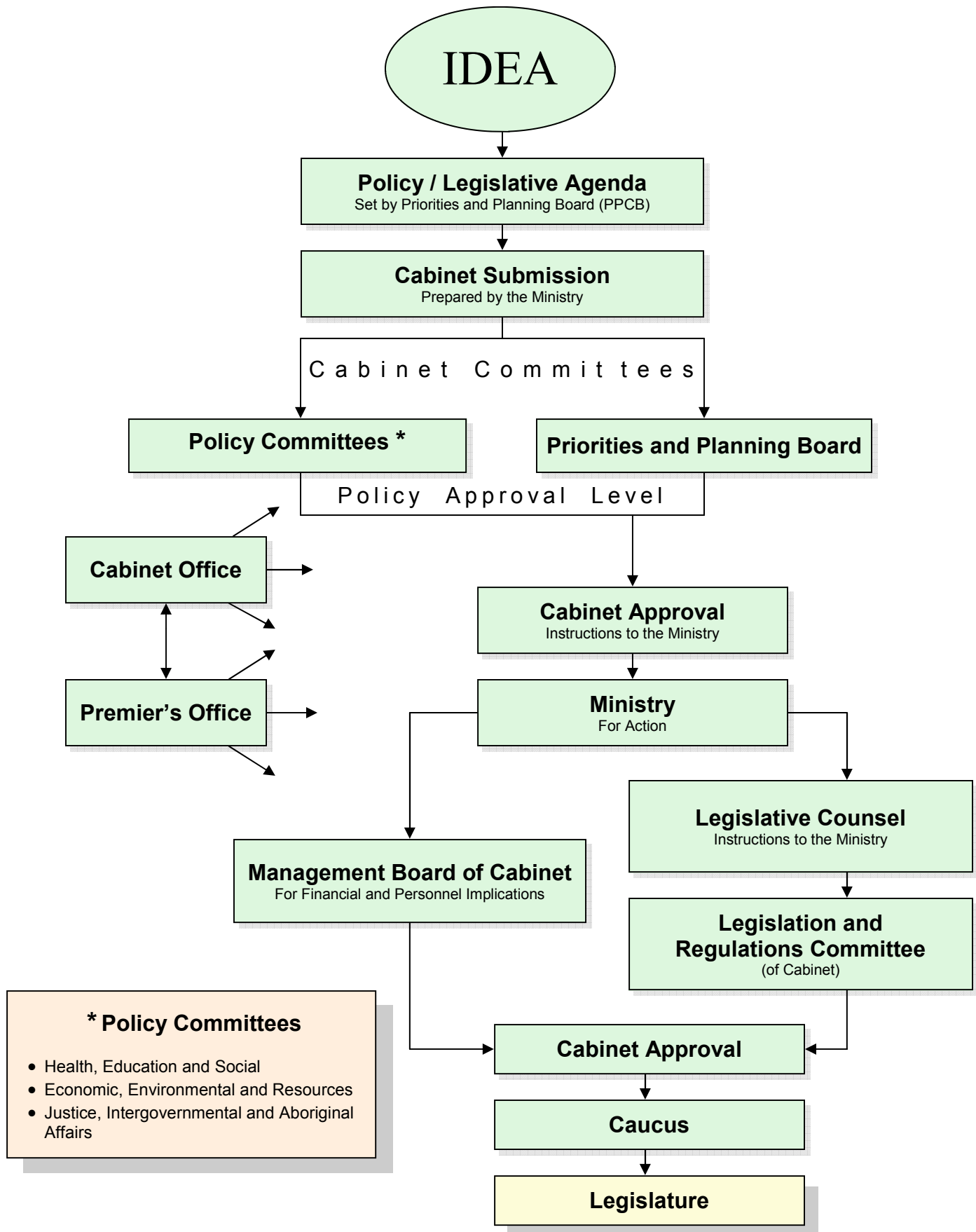
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#### **Explanation:** (also see [Diagram](#) below)

The process by which ideas or proposals are turned into legislative proposals and put on the government's agenda is highly complex. The diagram which follows this explanation gives an outline of the process.

Arguably, the pre-legislative stages outlined below are more important to the fate of a proposal than the formal legislative process. This is because strong party discipline and the tendency of the electoral system to produce majority governments combine to create a solid and predictable block of support for government initiatives. The largest constraint on the passage of government bills by the legislature is time, not the ability of opposition parties to defeat legislative proposals. As a result, the most critical moments in the life of a bill often occur in the pre-legislative stages, where there are many opportunities for a proposal to be defeated, to be significantly amended, or to be given too low a priority to continue its journey to the legislature. Several features of the pre-legislative process are significant.

- Firstly, it occurs almost entirely out of the public eye, protected by rules and conventions of confidentiality. The opposition, the press, and—most importantly—citizens learn only of the legislative proposals that survive the pre-legislative process, not the many more that are rejected or set aside at some step along the way.
- Secondly, the process is never quite the same from one government to the next. The pre-legislative stages involve the various structures and processes of cabinet, and these are entirely the prerogative of the premier to organize as he or she sees fit.
- Thirdly, while the actual drafting of legislation and regulations and much of the background briefing material is prepared by the ministry(ies) involved, significant direction is given by both the Cabinet Office and the Premier's Office, two central agencies with a significant and ongoing interest in shaping, if not controlling, the government's legislative agenda.
- Finally, the ultimate authority for any legislative proposal to proceed to the Assembly as a bill rests with the Cabinet, which is involved in the process (as sketched out below) at several points. Perhaps the most important of these is right at the start, when the Cabinet establishes the strategic priorities that are to dominate the government's policy agenda. It will be expected that legislative proposals received from ministers, ministries or elsewhere will be geared to these priorities.



Click [here](#) for legislative stages.

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