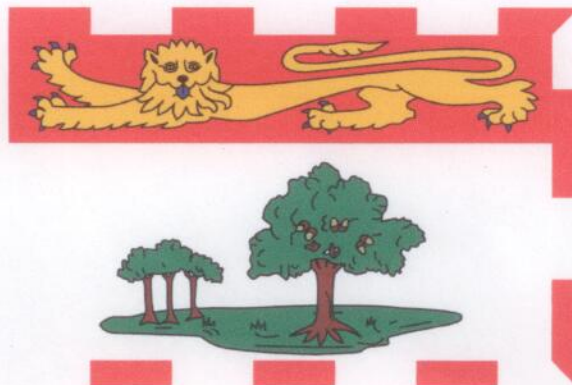




## Provincial and Canadian Flags

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# The Canadian Flag

## A symbol of Canadian identity

The official ceremony inaugurating the new Canadian flag was held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on February 15, 1965, with Governor General Georges Vanier, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, the members of the Cabinet and thousands of Canadians in attendance. The Canadian Red Ensign, bearing the Union Jack and the shield of the royal arms of Canada, was lowered and then, on the stroke of noon, our new maple leaf flag was raised. The crowd sang the national anthem O Canada followed by the royal anthem God Save the Queen.

The following words, spoken on that momentous day by the Honourable Maurice Bourget, Speaker of the Senate, added further symbolic meaning to our flag: "The flag is the symbol of the nation's unity, for it, beyond any doubt, represents all the citizens of Canada without distinction of race, language, belief or opinion."<sup>1</sup>



## The Birth of the Canadian Flag

The search for a new Canadian flag started in earnest in 1925 when a committee of the Privy Council began to research possible designs for a national flag. However, the work of the committee was never completed.

Later, in 1946, a select parliamentary committee was appointed with a similar mandate, called for submissions and received more than 2,600 designs. Still, the Parliament of Canada was never called upon to formally vote on a design.

Early in 1964, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson informed the House of Commons that the government wished to adopt a distinctive national flag. The 1967 centennial celebration of Confederation was, after all, approaching. As a result, a Senate and House of Commons Committee was formed and submissions were called for once again.

In October 1964, after eliminating various proposals, the committee was left with three possible designs -- a Red Ensign with the fleur-de-lis and the Union Jack, a design incorporating three red maple leaves, and a red flag with a single, stylized red maple leaf on a white square. (Pearson himself preferred a design with three red maple leaves between two blue borders.)

Two heraldry experts, who both favoured a three-leaf design, played a decisive role in the choice of our flag: Alan Beddoe, a retired naval captain and heraldic adviser to the Royal Canadian Navy, and Colonel Fortescue Duguid, a heraldist and historian.

The names of Mr. John Matheson and Dr. George Stanley are well known in the story of the evolution of a new Canadian flag. Mr. Matheson, a Member of Parliament from Ontario, was perhaps one of the strongest supporters of a new flag and played a key advisory role. Dr. Stanley was Dean of Arts at the Royal Military College in Kingston, and brought to the attention of the committee the fact that the Commandant's flag at the College -- an emblem, i.e. a mailed fist, on a red and white ground -- was impressive. Dr. Stanley's design is based on a strong sense of Canadian history. The combination of red, white and red first appeared in the General Service Medal issued by Queen Victoria. Red and white were subsequently proclaimed Canada's national colours by King George V in 1921. Three years earlier, Major General (later the Honourable) Sir Eugene Fiset had recommended that Canada's emblem be the single red maple leaf on a white field - the device worn by all Canadian Olympic athletes since 1904.

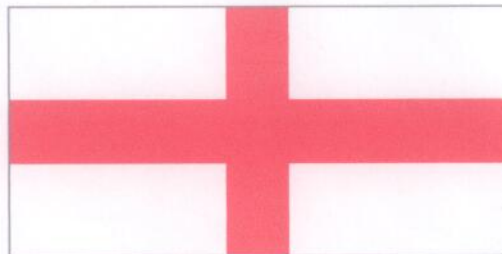
The committee eventually decided to recommend the single-leaf design, which was approved by resolution of the House of Commons on December 15, 1964, followed by the Senate on December 17, 1964, and proclaimed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, to take effect on February 15, 1965.

In due course the final design of the stylized maple leaf was established by Mr. Jacques St-Cyr, the precise dimensions of red and white were suggested by Mr. George Best, and the technical description of precise shade of red defined by Dr. Gunter Wyszchi.

The national flag of Canada, then, came into being, credit to those eminent Canadians: the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, who wanted a distinctive national flag as a vehicle to promote national unity; John Matheson, who established the conceptual framework for a suitable flag, then sought out and combined the appropriate components to create it; and Dr. George Stanley, who provided the seminal concept - the central concepts of red-white-red stripes with a central maple leaf - in this process.<sup>2</sup>

## First Canadian Flags

The St. George's Cross, which is prominent in many provincial and territorial coats of arms, traces its history back to the legend of St. George, who became the patron saint of England in the late Middle Ages. The earliest recorded use of the St. George's Cross in Canada is found in a watercolour painting by John White that depicts English explorers skirmishing with Inuit, almost certainly on Baffin Island during Martin Frobisher's expedition of 1577.



The fleur-de-lis was a symbol of French sovereignty in Canada from 1534, when Jacques Cartier landed and claimed the new world for France, until the early 1760s, when Canada was ceded to the United Kingdom. Although a number of French military flags were used in Canada during this period, including the white flag of la Marine royale after 1674, the fleur-de-lis held a position of some prominence.



In the early 1760s, the official British flag was the two-crossed jack or the [Royal Union flag](#) (known more commonly as the Union Jack). Although first flown in 1610, the Royal Union flag was used at all British establishments on the North American continent from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico. This flag is often referred to as the flag of Canada's United Empire Loyalists.



Following the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, the diagonal Cross of St. Patrick was incorporated with England's St. George's Cross and Scotland's Cross of St. Andrew. This gave the [Royal Union flag](#) its present-day configuration. This flag was used across British North America and in Canada even after Confederation in 1867.



The Canadian Red Ensign, a red flag with the [Royal Union flag](#) in the upper corner, was created in 1707 as the flag of the British Merchant Marine. From approximately 1870 to 1904, it was used on land and sea as Canada's flag, with the addition of a shield in the fly bearing the quartered arms of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Although its use on land had never been sanctioned except by public usage, in 1892 the British admiralty approved the use of the Red Ensign for Canadian use at sea. This gave rise to the name the Canadian Red Ensign.



As new provinces entered Confederation, or when they received some mark of identification (sometimes taken from their seal), that mark was incorporated into the shield on the Canadian Red Ensign. By the turn of the century, the shield was made up of the coats of arms of the seven provinces then in Confederation.

In 1922, this unofficial version of the Canadian Red Ensign was changed by an Order in Council and the composite shield was replaced with the shield from the royal arms of Canada, more commonly known as the Canadian Coat of Arms. Two years later, this new version was approved for use on Canadian government buildings abroad. A similar order in 1945 authorized its use on federal buildings within Canada until a new national flag was adopted.

The Canadian Red Ensign was replaced by the red and white maple leaf flag on February 15, 1965.<sup>3</sup>



# The Royal Union Flag

## General

The original [Royal Union Flag](#), or Union Jack, was first raised in Canada at the British settlement in Newfoundland after 1610. Although the Red Ensign was widely used in Canada from the time of Confederation until the national flag was adopted in 1965, the Union Jack was the affirmed national symbol from 1904 and was the flag under which Canadian troops fought during the First World War. The Union Jack maintains its presence in Canada through its incorporation in the provincial flags of Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia.

When flown or displayed in Canada, the Union Jack serves two purposes. First, it is the national flag of the United Kingdom, and second, it is flown as a symbol of membership in the Commonwealth and allegiance to the Crown as approved by Parliament on December 18, 1964.

The order of precedence of the Union Jack in relation to provincial and territorial flags varies in accordance with the reason it is flown.

- when representing the United Kingdom as a sovereign nation, the Union Jack takes precedence before the flag of a province or territory;
- when representing Canada's membership in the Commonwealth or allegiance to the Crown, for example during a Royal Visit, the Union Jack is considered as a "symbolic flag" and as such is displayed after any other flag.

When the Union Jack is flown during a visit to Canada by a person representing the United Kingdom, the normal grouping of one Canadian flag and one Union Jack will be followed. On some occasions, it may be deemed necessary to add a provincial flag to the display. In this case the Union Jack will take precedence before the provincial flag as it represents the United Kingdom.

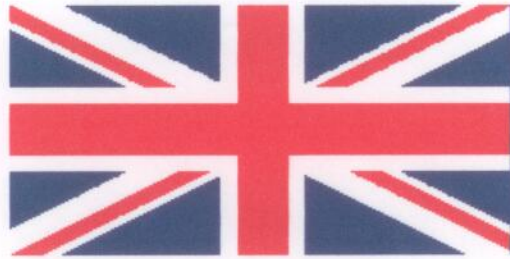
The Union Jack will, where physical arrangements allow, be flown along with the Canadian flag at federal buildings, airports, military bases, and other appropriate establishments within Canada, from sunrise to sunset, on the following occasions annually:

- the date of the official observance of Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday, on [Victoria Day](#), the Monday preceding May 25;
- the anniversary of the proclamation of the [Statute of Westminster](#) (December 11);
- the date of the official observance of [Commonwealth Day](#) (the second Monday in March).

Physical arrangements means the existence of at least two flag poles. The Canadian flag will always take precedence and will not be replaced by the Union Jack. Where only one pole exists, no steps shall be taken to erect an additional pole.

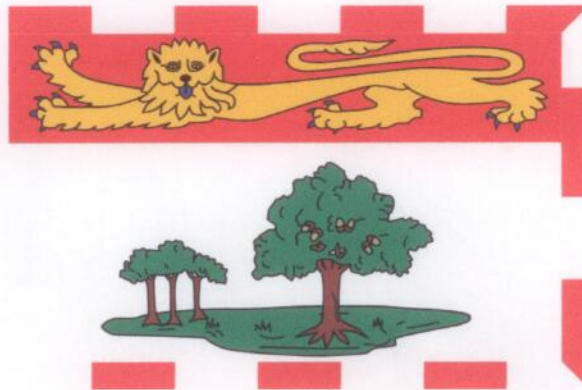
The Union Jack may be flown with the Canadian flag at the National War Memorial and at similarly appropriate locations in Canada in connection with ceremonies marking

anniversaries of events in which Canadian forces participated with other Commonwealth forces.<sup>4</sup>



## The Flag of Prince Edward Island Provincial Flag

The design of the Prince Edward Island flag is modeled after the coat of arms in rectangular shape and is bordered on the three sides away from the mast by alternative bands of red and white.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> "The National Flag of Canada." Canadian Heritage website. [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df1\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df1_e.cfm). Copied directly.

<sup>2</sup> "Birth of the Canadian Flag." Canadian Heritage website. [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df3\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df3_e.cfm). Copied directly.

<sup>3</sup> "First Canadian Flags." Canadian Heritage Website. [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df5\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/df5_e.cfm). Copied directly.

<sup>4</sup> "The Royal Union Flag." Canadian Heritage website. [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/union\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/union_e.cfm). Copied directly.

<sup>5</sup> "Provincial Flag." The Government of Prince Edward Island website. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/infopei/index.php3?number=1599&lang=E>. Copied directly.

## Quiz

1. How many designs did the 1964 Parliamentary Committee review before choosing the maple leaf for Canada's flag?
  - a) 200
  - b) 2000
  - c) 20000
2. On what day was the maple leaf flag first raised on Parliament Hill?
  - a) February 15, 1965
  - b) July 1, 1965
  - c) July 1, 1967
3. The maple leaf is a prominent Canadian symbol. On what coin does it appear?
  - a) The penny
  - b) The nickel
  - c) The quarter
4. What are Canada's official colours?
  - a) Blue and red
  - b) Gold and red
  - c) White and red
5. What is the origin of the name "Canada"?
  - a) Inuit
  - b) Huron-Iroquois
  - c) Metis
6. Canada's Parliament in April 2008 passed a motion about Canada's flag. What was the motion about?
  - a) The motion called for the flag to be lowered on any day a Canadian soldier is killed overseas.
  - b) The motion called for a committee to review possible changes to the flag.
  - c) The motion called for a reaffirmation of the maple leaf as the national symbol of Canada.
  - d) The motion called for the government to stop lowering the flag for deaths of prominent political figures.
7. In 1947, Canada became the first Commonwealth country to:
  - a) Get its own citizenship act.
  - b) Stop pledging allegiance to the Queen in public schools.
  - c) Get its own flag.
  - d) Create its own military medals for meritorious service

\*this quiz taken from [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca) and [http://www.craigmarlatt.com/canada/symbols\\_facts&lists/quiz.html](http://www.craigmarlatt.com/canada/symbols_facts&lists/quiz.html)



## Answers

1. b) 2000
2. A) February 15, 1965
3. A) The penny
4. C) White and red
5. B) Huron-Iroquois.
6. Answer A. The motion called for the flag to be lowered on any day a Canadian soldier is killed overseas. Although the motion passed, the Conservative government does not agree with it. Canada only began lowering the flag for soldiers' deaths in 2002, breaking the tradition of lowering it for war dead only on Remembrance Day.
7. Answer A. Get its own citizenship act. Prior to that year, Canadians were considered British subjects residing in Canada. Now, Canada is a popular destination for immigrants. Canada currently has a backlog of 900,000 immigration applications.