

# FLAG ETIQUETTE IN CANADA



Canadian Heritage Patrimoine canadien

Canada

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## ***Flag Etiquette in Canada***

(this document is also available at: <http://www.pch.gc.ca/ceremonial-symb>)

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# *Chapter 1* Introduction

## **Introduction**

Flags are symbols that identify people belonging to a group. The National Flag of Canada and the flags of the provinces and territories are symbols of honour and pride for all Canadians. They should be treated with respect.

The manner in which flags may be displayed in Canada is not governed by any legislation but by established practice. The etiquette outlined in this brochure is an adaptation of international usage and of customs the federal government has been observing for many years.

The rules applied by the federal government are in no way mandatory for individuals or organizations; they may serve as guidelines for all persons who wish to display the Canadian flag and other flags in Canada.

## **History**

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.

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.

## Glossary

When describing the details of a flag, it is assumed that the flag is flying from a staff with the flag flying towards the right as seen by the observer (Figure 1).

The canton in the National Flag of Canada is not apparent, but shows very clearly in the Canadian Forces Ensign (Figure 2).

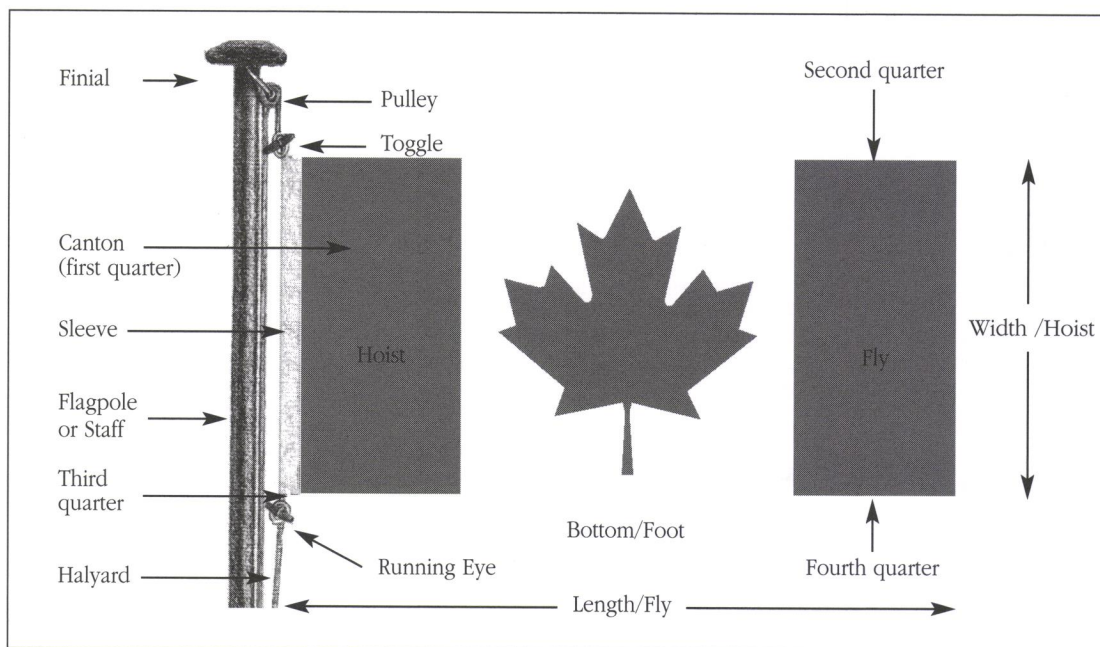
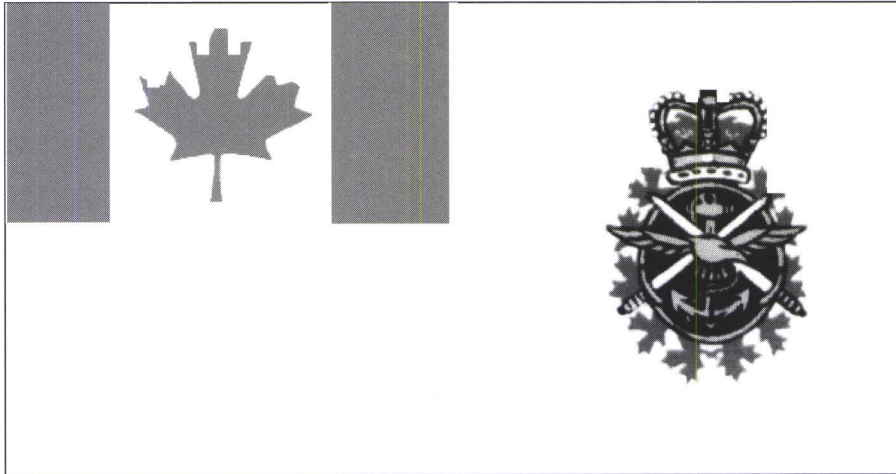


Figure 1



*Figure 2*

**Canton**

The place of honour in a flag is the upper half of the hoist. It is also called the first quarter and sometimes the upper hoist.

**Flagpole or staff**

A cylindrical piece of wood or metal to which a flag is attached or from which it is hoisted.

**Fly**

The half of a flag farthest from the halyard; also a synonym for length.

**Finial**

The decorative ornament on the top of a pike, staff or pole; may be in the form of a spearpoint, ball, maple leaf, crown, etc.

**Fourth quarter**

The lower half of the fly.

**Halyard**

The rope which raises or lowers a flag.

**Hoist**

The half of a flag nearest to the halyard; also a synonym for width.

**Pulley**

Grooved wheel for the halyard to pass over, which permits the raising and lowering of a flag.





**Running eye and toggle**

A method of hoisting a flag by means of a rope sewn into its heading, which has a wooden toggle at the top and a loop at the bottom that fasten to their opposites at the end of the halyard.

**Second quarter**

The upper half of the fly.

**Sleeve**

A tube of material along the hoist of a flag through which the staff or halyard is inserted.

**Third quarter**

The lower half of the hoist; it is also called the lower hoist.

**Description and Dimensions of the National Flag**

**Technical description**

The National Flag of Canada is a red flag of the proportions two by length and one by width (or 64 units in length and 32 units in width or depth as shown in the accompanying diagram), containing in its centre a white square the width of the flag, with a single red maple leaf centered therein (Figure 3).

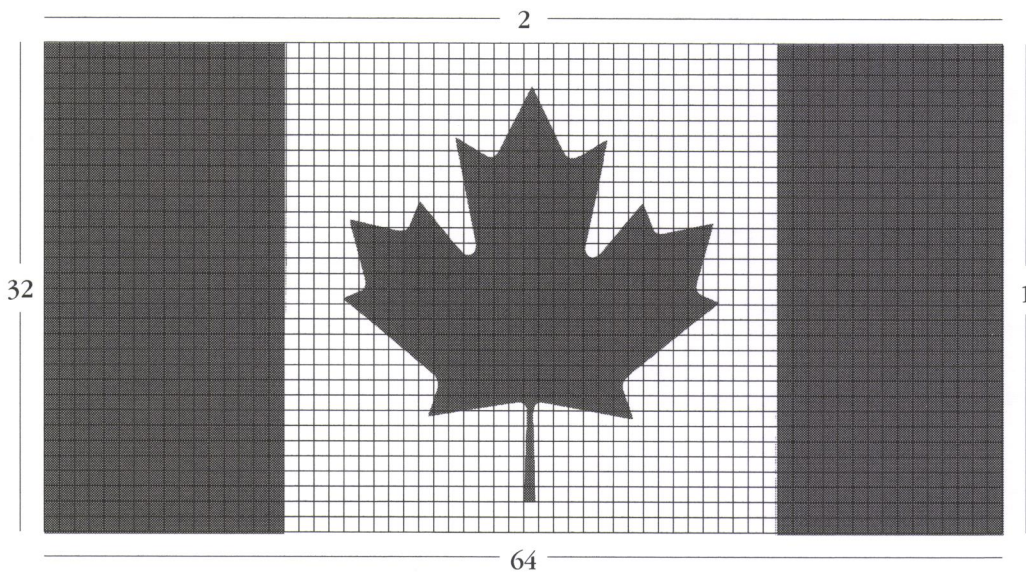


Figure 3



## Colours

The colours red and white are the same as those that were used in the Canadian Red Ensign and are found in the Union Jack. Red and white are Canada's official colours and, with the maple leaf, are the symbolic elements found in the Canadian flag.

The printing ink colour is FIP red: General Printing Ink, No. 0-712; Inmont Canada Ltd., No. 4T51577; Monarch Inks, No. 62539/0; or Sinclair and Valentine, No. RL163929/0.

When printing in four-colour process, the proper mixture is 100% yellow and 100% magenta.

When reproducing the flag red at 100%, the closest colour from the Pantone colour specifier is PMS 032.

When the flag red is used to reproduce screens, it is advisable to take PMS 485 as this one maintains the integrity of the orange colour in the flag.

The painting colours are FIP red No. 509-211 and white: 513-201

## Heraldic description

The heraldic description is: gules (red) on a Canadian pale argent (white) a maple leaf of the first.

## Flagpoles

In the general sense, flagpoles may be divided into three categories: exterior permanent poles (located on buildings or on the adjacent grounds); exterior portable poles; and interior poles.

The exterior poles should be fitted with a hoisting device such as a halyard and pulley arrangement to allow for the flags to be easily changed and half-masted as required.

Flag size and pole length for building poles should correspond to the following dimensions:

Flag	Pole
3 feet × 6 feet 0.90 m × 1.80 m	17 feet to 20 feet 5.10 m to 6 m
4½ feet × 9 feet 1.40 m × 2.80 m	30 feet to 35 feet 9 m to 10.50 m
6 feet × 12 feet 1.80 m × 3.60 m	40 feet to 45 feet 12 m to 13.50 m
7½ feet × 15 feet 2.30 m × 4.60 m	50 feet 15 m

## **Chapter 2** *Rules for Displaying Flags*

### **Dignity of the Flag**

The National Flag of Canada should be displayed only in a manner befitting the national emblem; it should not be subjected to indignity or displayed in a position inferior to any other flag or ensign. The Canadian flag always takes precedence over all other national flags when flown in Canada. The only flags to which precedence is given over the Canadian flag are the personal standards of members of the Royal Family and of Her Majesty's representatives in Canada. The Canadian flag should always be flown aloft and free.

It is improper to use the National Flag of Canada as a table or seat cover or as a masking for boxes, barriers, or intervening space between floor and ground level on a dais or platform.

While it is not technically incorrect to use the National Flag of Canada to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony, it is not common practice to do so and should be discouraged.

When the National Flag of Canada is raised or lowered, or when it is carried past in a parade or review, all present should face the flag, men should remove their hats, and all should remain silent. Those in uniform should salute.

### **Displaying the Flag**

The Canadian flag is flown at all federal government buildings, airports, and military bases and establishments within and outside Canada in conformity with rules adopted by the Government in 1966, and directives of the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Government Services at Crown-owned lease-purchase and leased facilities. The flag may be flown by night as well as by day.



The National Flag of Canada may be displayed as follows:

**Flat against a surface, horizontally and vertically**

If hung horizontally, the upper part of the leaf should be up and the stem down. If hung vertically, the flag should be placed so that the upper part of the leaf is to the left and the stem is to the right as seen by spectators. Flags hung vertically should be hung so that the canton is in the upper left corner (Figure 4).

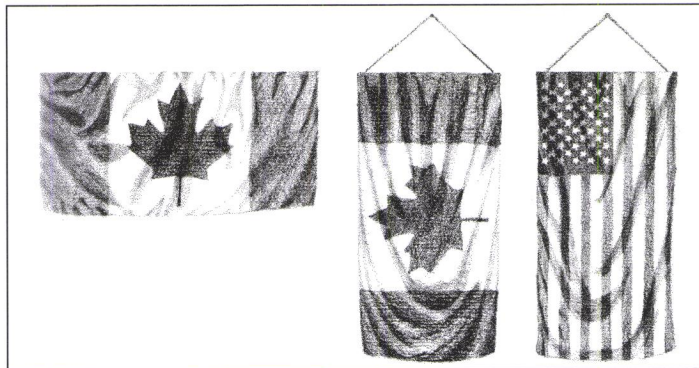


Figure 4

**On a staff**

The top left (first) quarter or canton should be placed in the position nearest the top of the staff. When carried, the flag should be aloft and free.

**On a flag rope (halyard)**

The canton should be placed uppermost, raised as closely as possible to the top with the flag rope tight.

**Suspended vertically in the middle of a street**

The upper part of the leaf should face the north in an east-west street (Figure 5), and face east in a north-south street (Figure 6), thus being on the left of the observer facing east or south respectively.

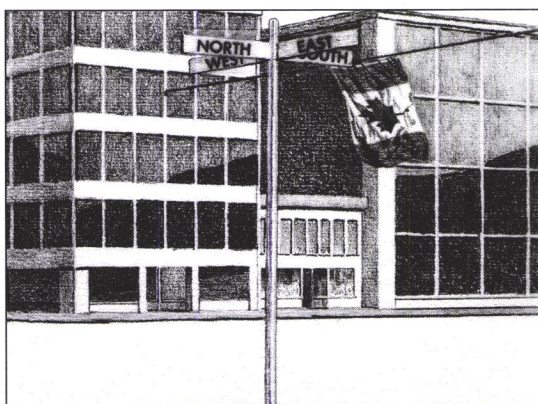


Figure 5

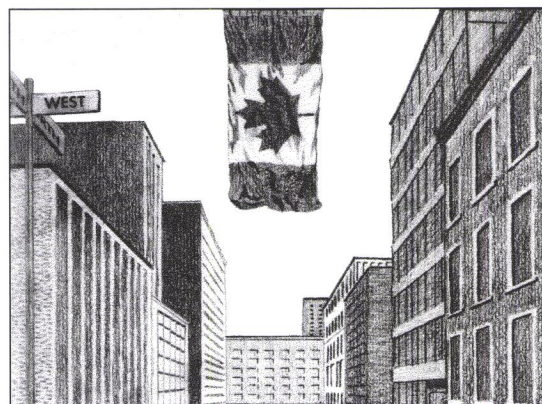


Figure 6



**Projected from a building**

Displayed horizontally or at an angle from a window or balcony, the canton must point outward.

**Affixed to a motor vehicle**

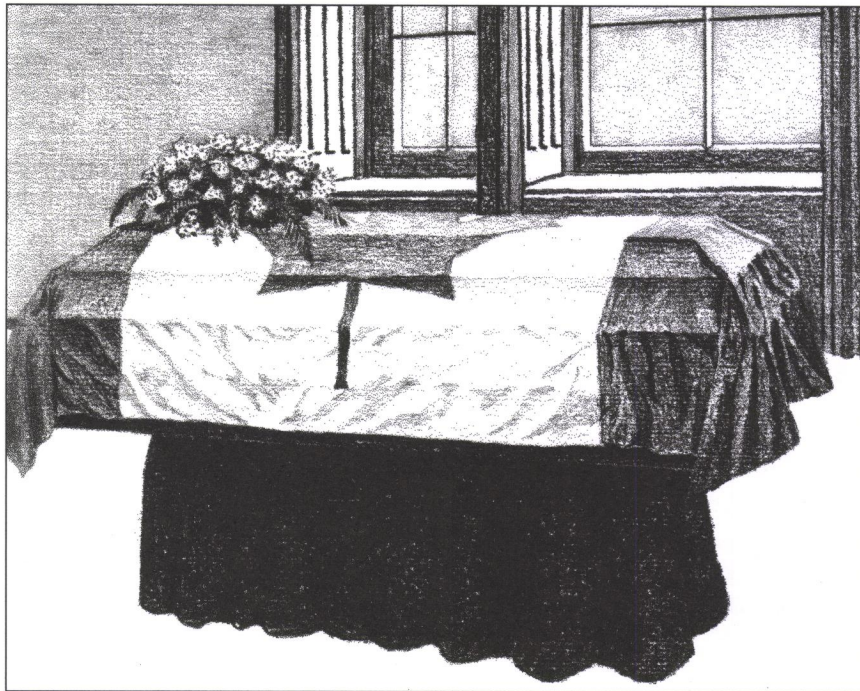
The flag must be on a pole firmly fixed to the chassis on the front right.

**Sharing the same base**

When only three flags are displayed, the Canadian flag should be at the centre. For those facing the display, the flag of the country being honoured or given prominence is placed to the left of centre, and the other to the right.

**When used to cover a casket at funerals**

The canton should be draped over the upper left corner of the casket (Figure 7). The flag should be removed before the casket is lowered into the grave or, at a crematorium, after the service. The flag size should be 4½ feet × 9 feet/1.40 m × 2.80 m.



*Figure 7*



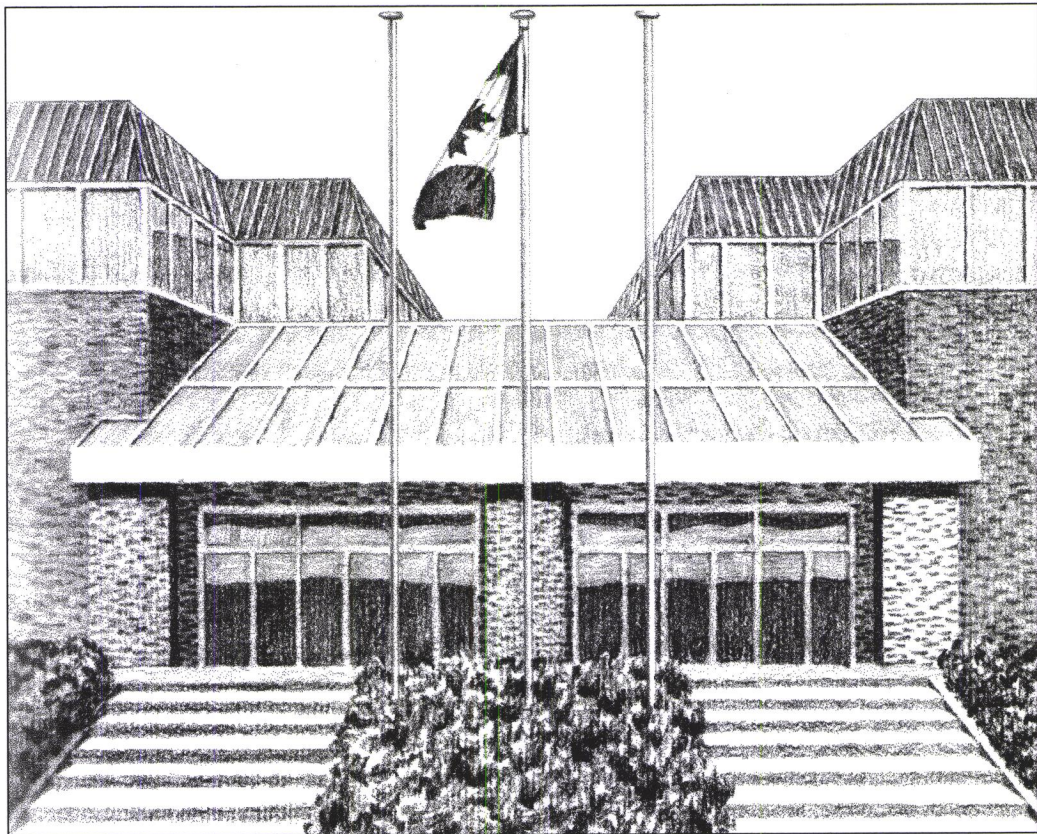
## Position of Honour

Due consideration should be given to flag etiquette and precedence whenever the National Flag of Canada or other sovereign national flag or provincial/territorial flag is displayed.

### Alone

When the National Flag of Canada is flown alone on top of or in front of a building where there are two flagpoles, it should be flown on the flagpole to the left of the observer facing the flag.

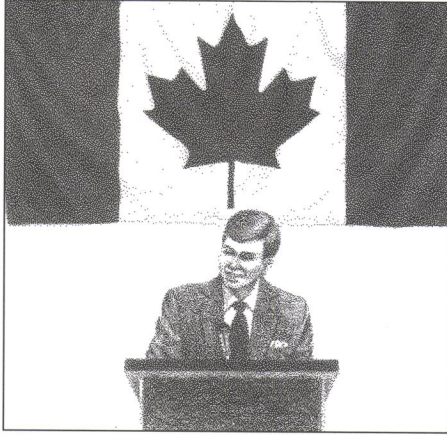
When the National Flag of Canada is flown alone on top of or in front of a building where there are more than two flagpoles, it should be flown as near as possible to the centre (Figure 8).



*Figure 8*

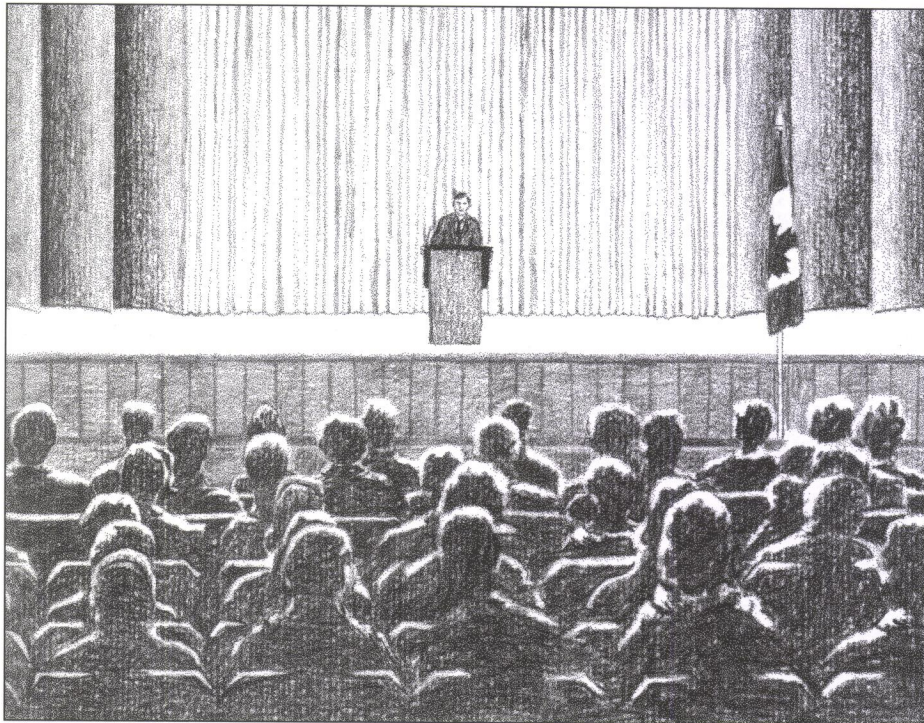


When the National Flag of Canada is displayed in the chancel of a church or on a speaker's platform, it should be against the wall, or on a staff on the celebrant's or speaker's right as he/she faces the audience (Figure 9).



*Figure 9*

When used in the body of a church or auditorium, the National Flag of Canada should be to the right of the congregation or spectators (Figure 10).



*Figure 10*

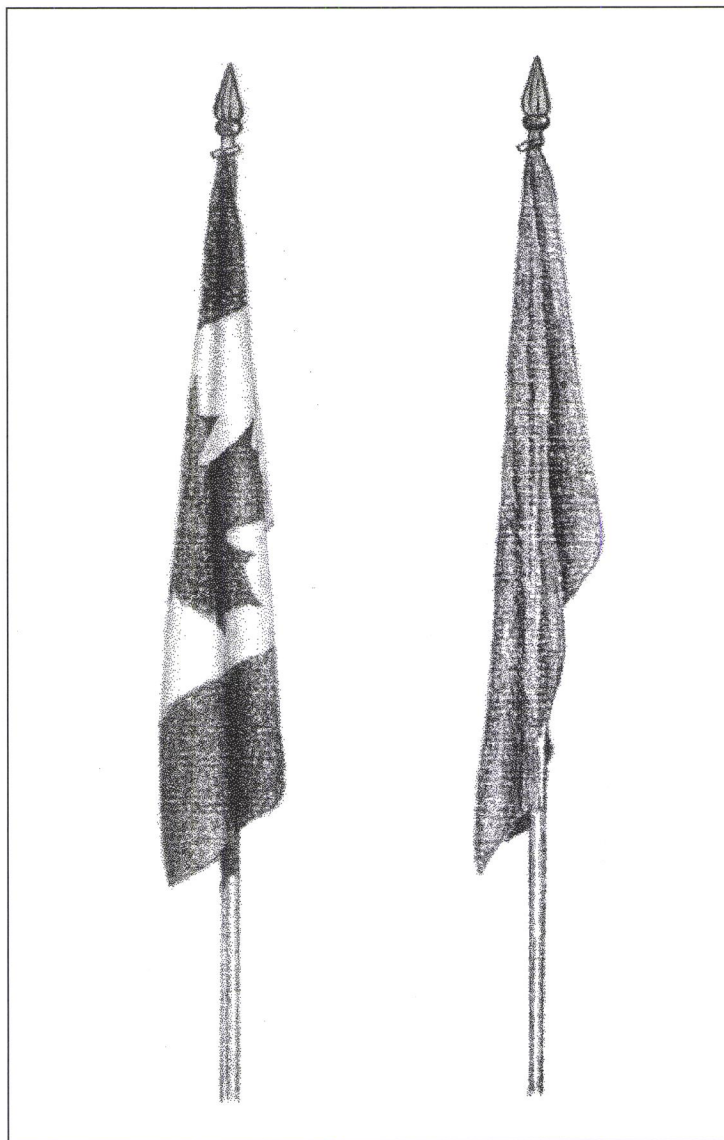


**With flags of sovereign nations, provinces/territories, international organizations, cities, companies, etc.**

The National Flag of Canada, when flown or paraded, takes precedence over all other national flags. When flown with other flags, all flags should be flown on separate staffs and at the same height, all being of the same size, with the National Flag of Canada occupying the position of honour.

The National Flag should be raised first and lowered last, unless the number of flags permits their being raised and lowered simultaneously.

With another flag, the National Flag of Canada should be on the left of the observer facing the flags; both should be at the same height (Figure 11).

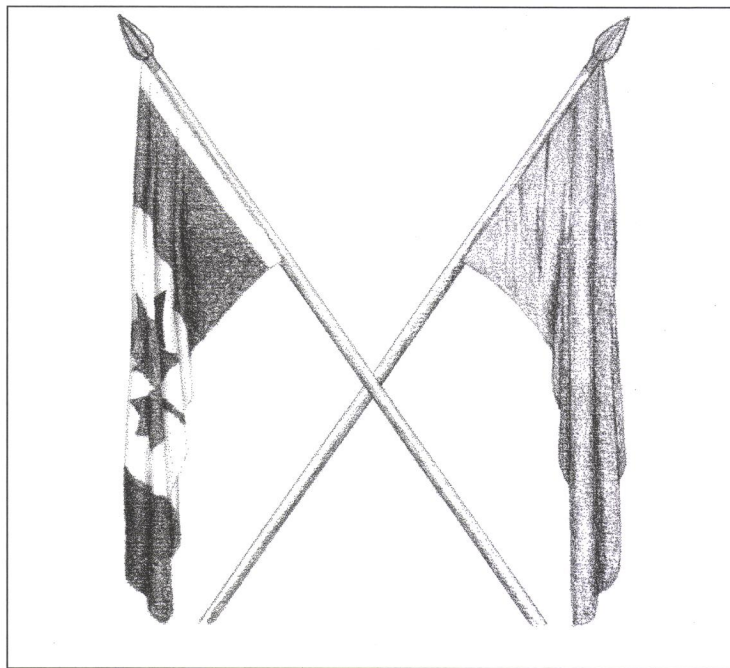


*Figure 11*



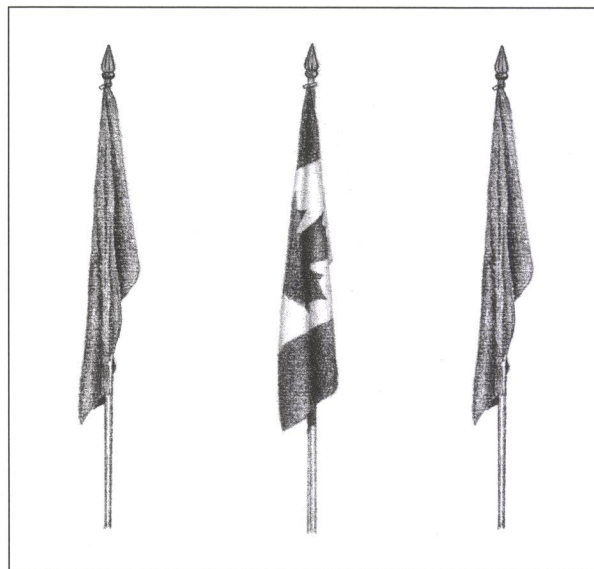


When crossed with another flag, the National Flag of Canada should be on the left of the observer facing the flags; its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag (Figure 12).



*Figure 12*

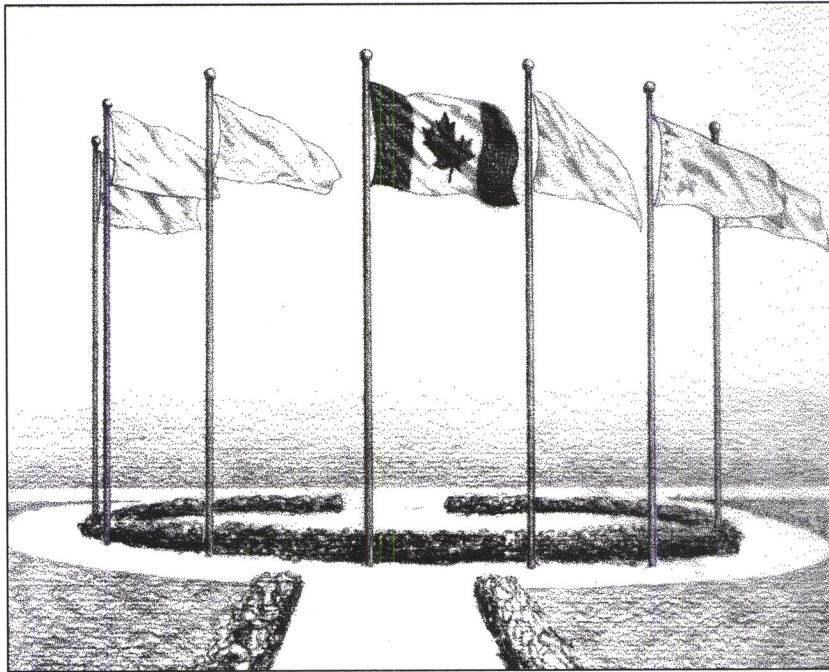
In a line of three flags, the National Flag of Canada should be in the centre. The other two flags should be placed to the left and right of the Canadian flag (alphabetical order for flags of sovereign nations), from the point of view of the observer facing the three staffs (Figure 13).



*Figure 13*



In a semi-circle of flags, the National Flag of Canada should be in the centre (Figure 14).



*Figure 14*



In an enclosed circle of flags, the Canadian flag should be flown on the flagpole immediately opposite the main entrance to a building or arena (Figure 15).

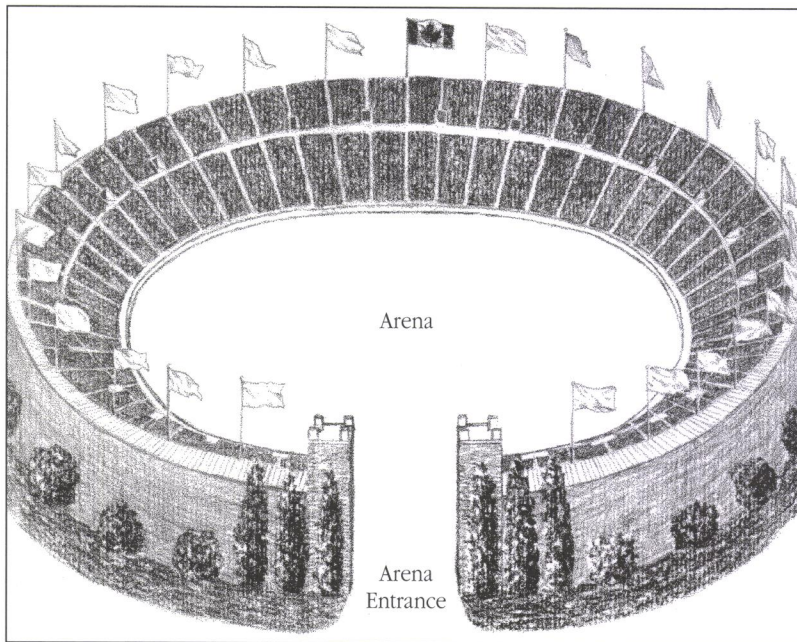
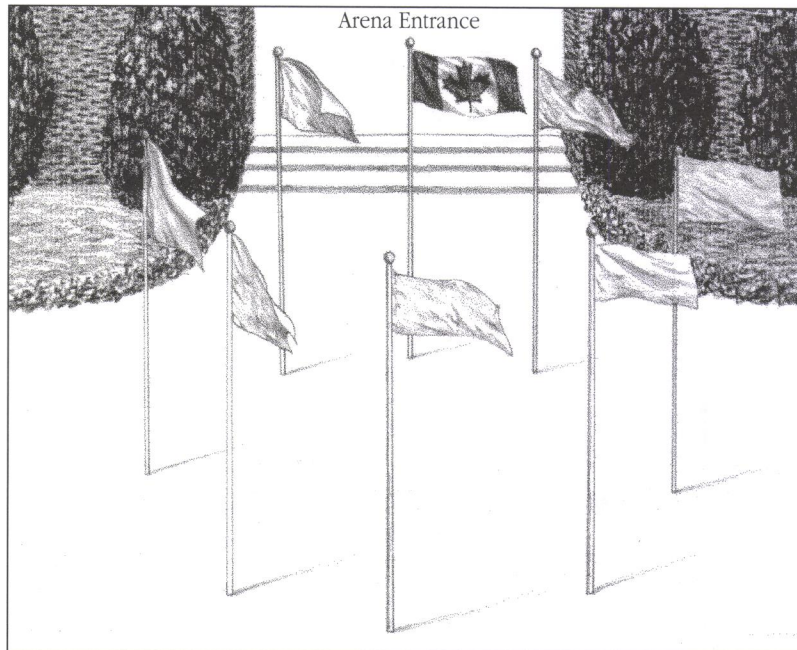
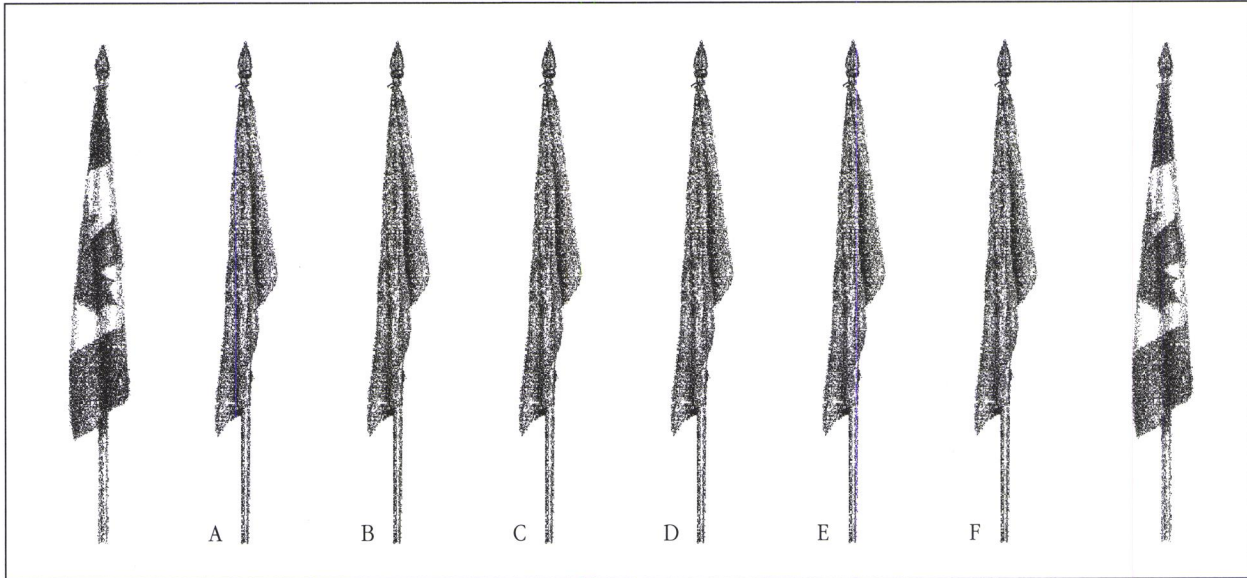


Figure 15



When there are more than three staffs, the National Flag of Canada should be flown on the left of the observer facing the flags, followed by the flags representing other sovereign nations ordered alphabetically, flags of provinces/territories, international organizations, cities, companies, etc. An additional National Flag of Canada may be flown at the end of the line (Figure 16).



- A. Sovereign nation (alphabetical order)
- B. Sovereign nation (alphabetical order)
- C. Province/territory
- D. International organization
- E. City
- F. Company pennant

Figure 16

Flags of the provinces and territories

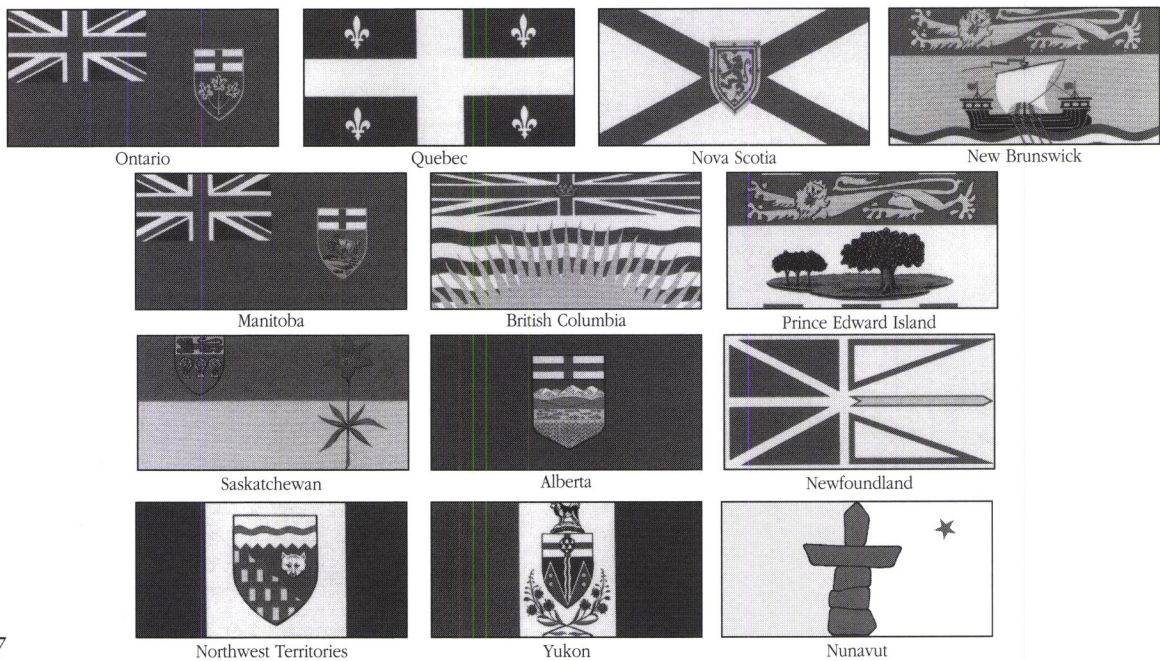


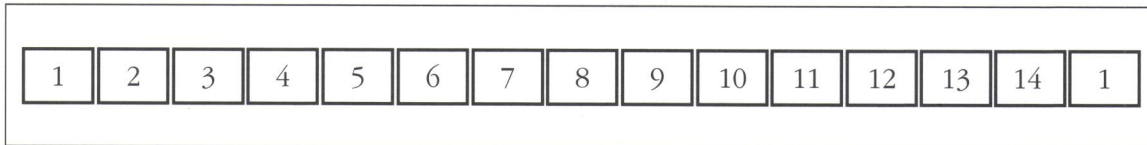
Figure 17



**With flags of the Canadian provinces and territories only**

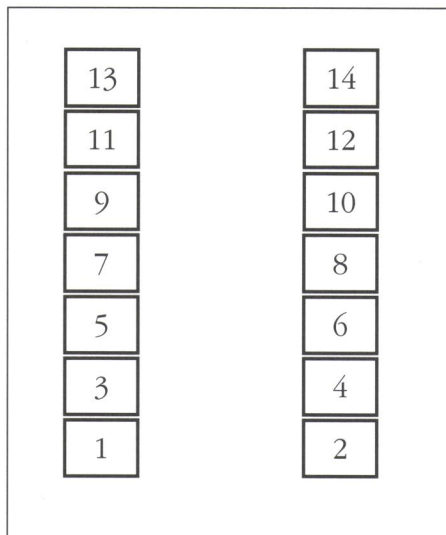
When provincial and territorial flags are flown with the National Flag of Canada, the order is based on precedence, which is determined by the date of entry into Confederation of the provinces and the territories. Following the Canadian flag, the sequence is as follows:

***Display along a wall***

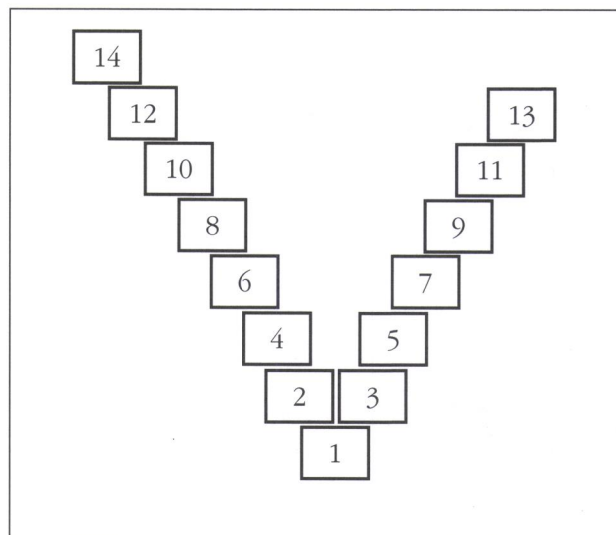


An additional National Flag of Canada may be displayed at the end of the line if desired.

***Display flanking an entrance***



***“V” display for visual effect***

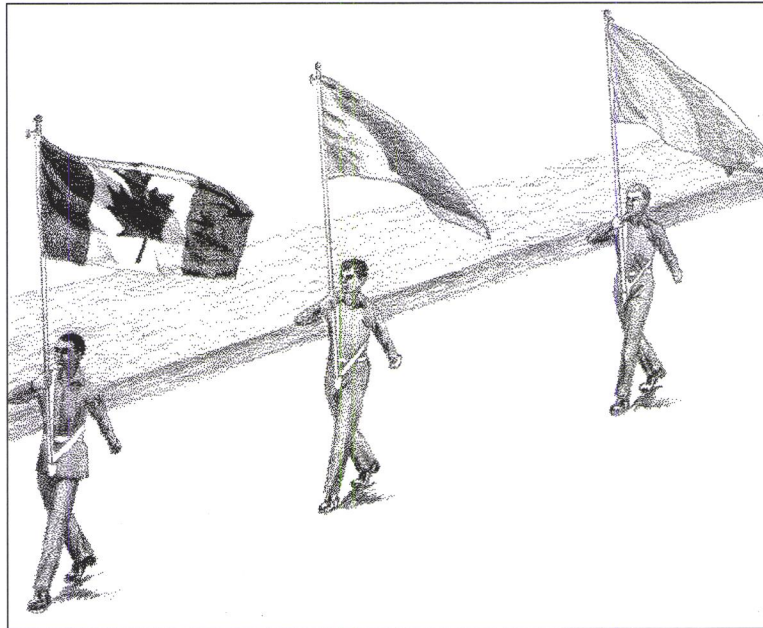


- 1 National Flag
- 2 Ontario (1867)
- 3 Quebec (1867)
- 4 Nova Scotia (1867)
- 5 New Brunswick (1867)
- 6 Manitoba (1870)
- 7 British Columbia (1871)

- 8 Prince Edward Island (1873)
- 9 Saskatchewan (1905)
- 10 Alberta (1905)
- 11 Newfoundland (1949)
- 12 Northwest Territories (1870)
- 13 Yukon (1898)
- 14 Nunavut (1999)

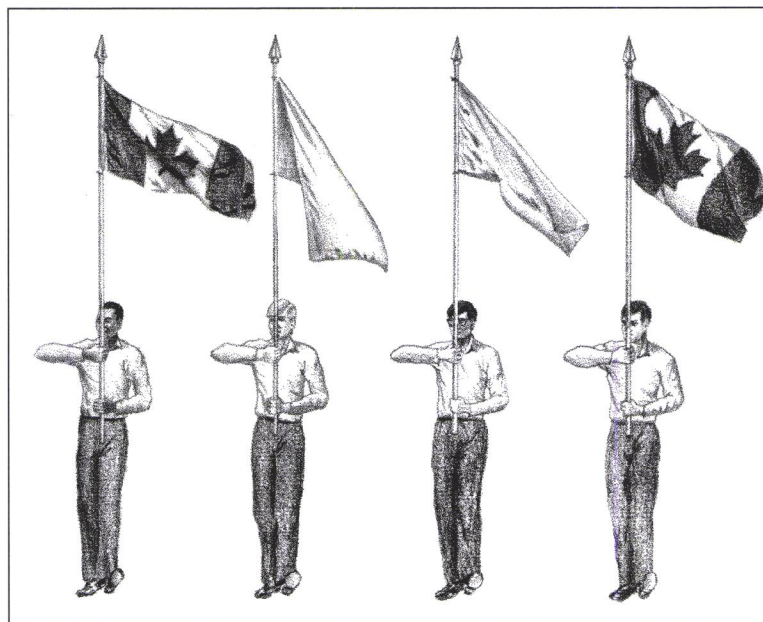
**Carried in a procession**

If carried with other flags, in single file, the National Flag of Canada should always lead (Figure 18).



*Figure 18*

If carried in line abreast, it is preferable to have the National Flag of Canada at each end of the line (Figure 19).



*Figure 19*



If only one National Flag of Canada is available, it should be placed in the centre of the line of flags carried abreast (Figure 20).

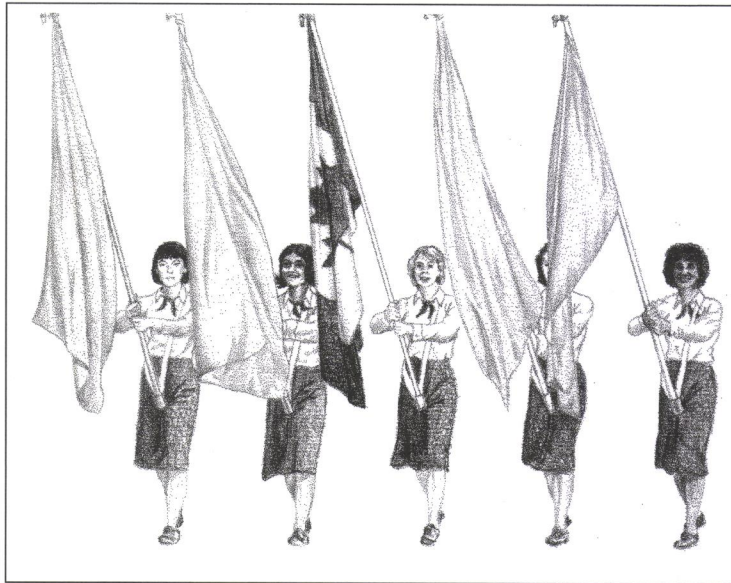


Figure 20

When the number of flags is even and the National Flag of Canada cannot be carried in the centre (of a line of flags abreast), it should be carried on the right-hand end of the line facing the direction of movement (Figure 21).

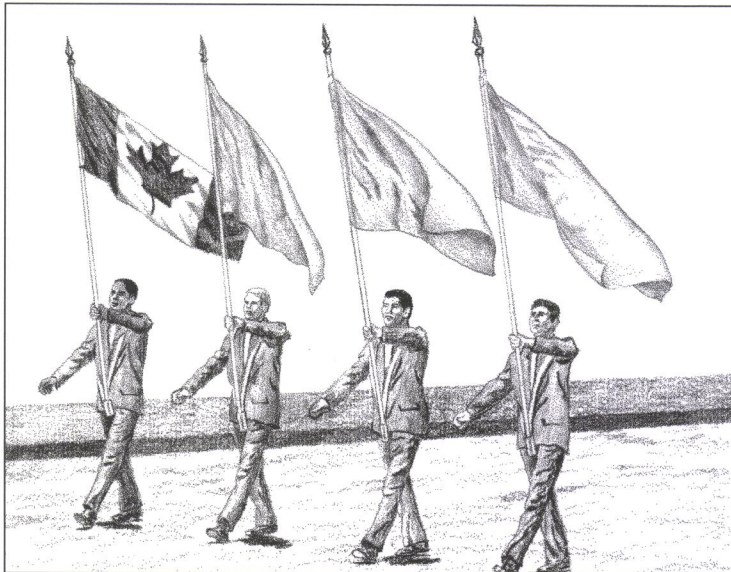


Figure 21

Note: It is suggested that the pole or pike used to carry flags be 7 feet to 8 feet/2.10 m to 2.40 m in length.



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## Flown on ships and boats

The National Flag of Canada is the proper national colours for all Canadian ships and boats, including pleasure craft. The *Canada Shipping Act* states that a Canadian ship shall hoist the flag on a signal being made to her by one of Her Majesty's Canadian ships, or any ship in the service of and belonging to the Government of Canada; on entering or leaving any foreign port; and if of 50 tonnes gross tonnage or upwards, on entering or leaving any Commonwealth port.

Foreign vessels may fly the Canadian flag as a "courtesy flag" when they are berthed in a Canadian port. The flag then is customarily flown from the foremast.

General rules governing merchant vessels and pleasure craft are as follows:

- the flag should be worn in harbour and in territorial waters but need not be worn while under way on the high seas unless the vessel wishes to identify her nationality to another ship;
- wherever possible, the proper place for a vessel to display the national colours is at the stern, except that when at sea, the flag may be flown from a gaff;
- when in harbour the flag should be hoisted at 0800 hours and lowered at sunset;
- when a merchant ship and a warship of any nationality pass or overtake one another, the merchant ship should dip the flag as a gesture of courtesy. If on a staff, the lowest corner of the flag should be brought to the level of the rail and kept there until the salutation is acknowledged by the naval vessel. If flown from a gaff, the flag should be lowered to six feet (1.80 m) above the level of the deck, until the salute is acknowledged;
- in times of mourning, the flag may be flown at half-mast, which places the upper corner of the flag next to the staff at approximately three-quarters of full-hoist. As on land, a flag hoisted to or lowered from half-mast position must first be hauled close-up.

## Half-masting for Mourning

Flags are flown at the half-mast position as a sign of mourning.

The flag is brought to the half-mast position by first raising it to the top of the mast and then immediately lowering it slowly to the half-mast position.

The position of the flag when flying at half-mast will depend on the size of the flag and the length of the flagstaff. It must be lowered at least to a position recognizably "half-mast" to avoid the appearance of a flag which has accidentally fallen away from the top of the mast owing to a loose flag rope. A satisfactory position for half-masting is to place the centre of the flag exactly half-way down the staff (Figure 22).



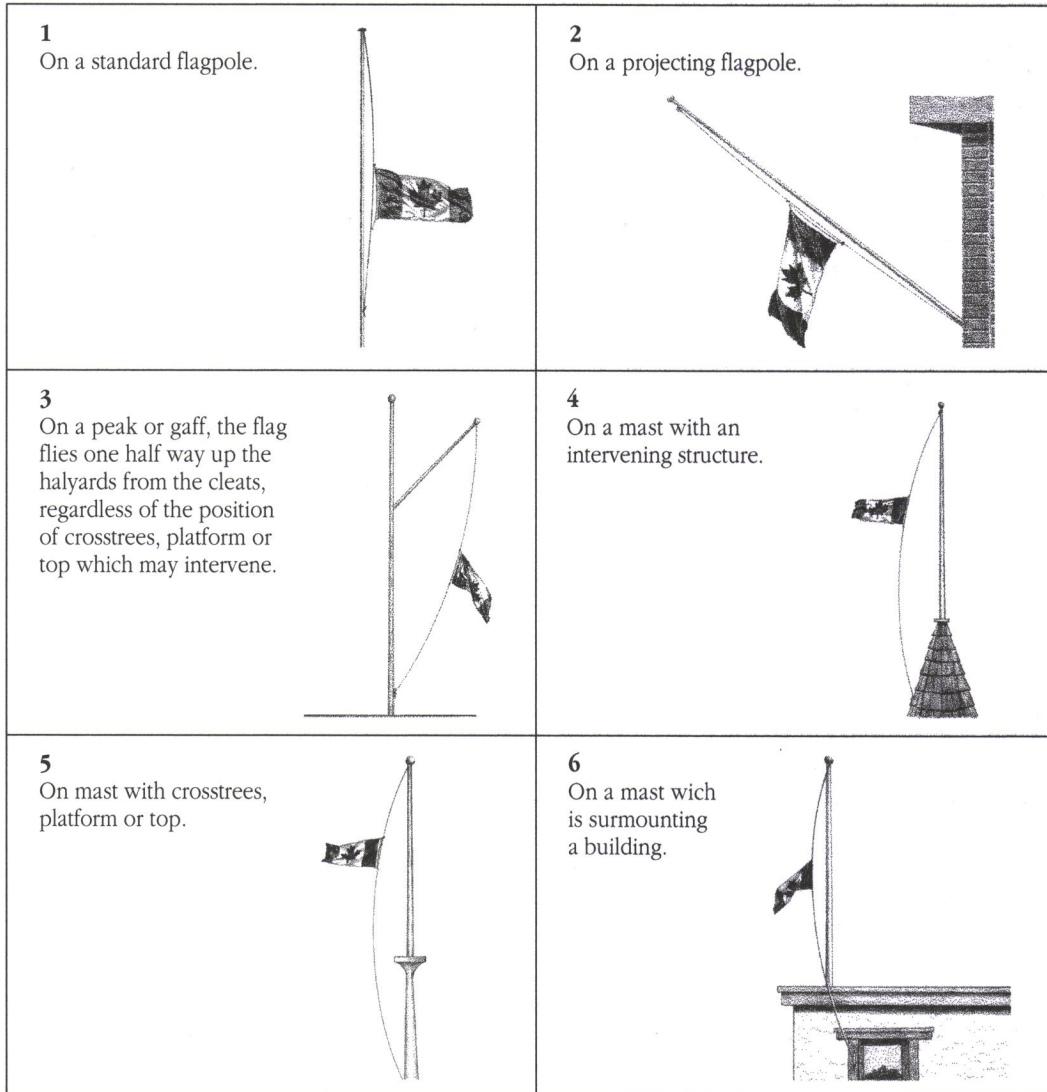


Figure 22

On occasions requiring that one flag be flown at half-mast, all flags flown together should also be flown at half-mast except personal flags and standards. Flags will only be half-masted on those flagpoles fitted with halyards and pulleys. Some buildings fly flags from horizontal or angled poles, without halyards, to which flags are permanently attached. Flags on these will not be half-masted.

Flags on federal government buildings, airports, military bases and other establishments are flown at half-mast when directed by the Department of Canadian Heritage. The following are examples of the practice:

- across Canada and abroad, on the death of the Sovereign or a member of the Royal Family related in the first degree to the Sovereign (spouse, son or daughter, father, mother, brother or sister), the Governor General, the Prime Minister, a former governor general, a former prime minister, or a federal cabinet minister;



- 
- within a province, on the death of the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier or another person similarly honoured by that province;
  - within his/her own riding, on the death of the Member of the House of Commons, or the Member of the Provincial/Territorial Legislature;
  - at his/her place of residence, on the death of a Senator, a Canadian Privy Councillor, or a Mayor.

Apart from occasions when flags on all government buildings and establishments across Canada are flown at half-mast, the flag on the Peace Tower of the Parliament Building at Ottawa is flown at half-mast:

- on the death of a Lieutenant Governor;
- on the death of a Canadian Privy Councillor, a Senator, or a Member of the House of Commons;
- on the death of a person whom it is desired to honour.

“Death” may be taken to include the day of death and up to and including the day of the funeral.

The flag on the Peace Tower and flags at the Lester B. Pearson Building (headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) are flown at half-mast from sunrise to sunset the day of the funeral of a foreign Head of State, a Head of Government of a Commonwealth country, or a Head of Mission accredited to Canada who dies while in office at Ottawa.

Flags at federal government buildings and other locations are also half-masted subject to special instructions on the death of members of the Royal Family other than those related in the first degree to the Sovereign, a Head of a Foreign State, or some other person whom it is desired to honour.

During periods of half-masting, the flag is raised to full-mast on all federal government buildings, airports, and military bases and establishments on statutory holidays, and also on the Peace Tower while a Head of State is visiting Parliament Hill. These procedures do not apply while flags are half-masted for the death of the Sovereign when they are only raised to full-mast for the day on which the accession of the new Monarch is proclaimed.

On Remembrance Day, November 11, the flag on the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings is flown at half-mast from 11:00 a.m. (to coincide with the start of the ceremony at the National War Memorial) until sunset.

On the Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace (April 28) and on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6), the flag on the Peace Tower is flown at half-mast from sunrise to sunset.



Figure 24



Figure 25

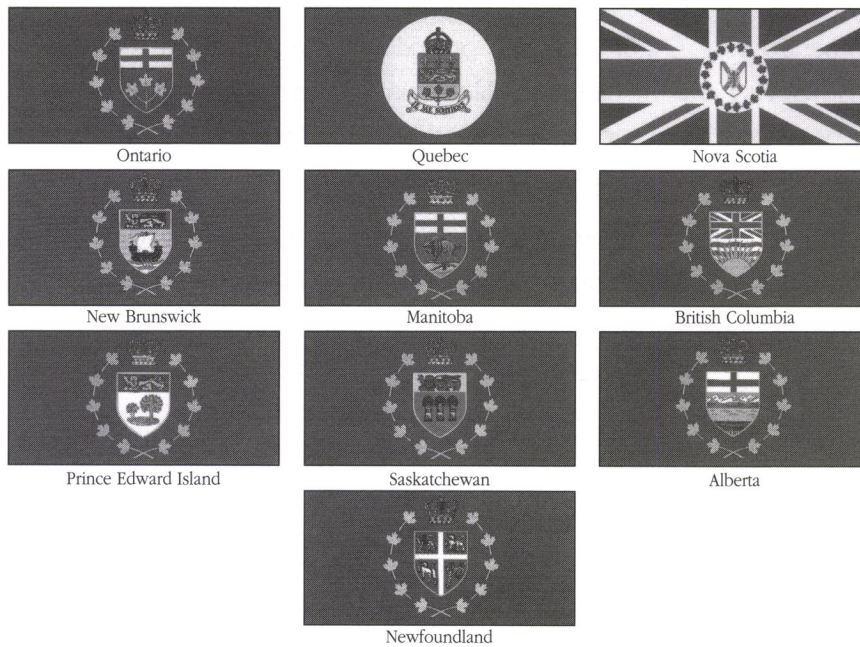


Figure 26

## Chapter 4 *The Royal Union Flag*

The Royal Union Flag (Figure 27), commonly known as the “Union Jack”, has a long history of usage in Canada dating back to the British settlement in Nova Scotia after 1621. Although the Red Ensign was widely used in Canada from the time of Confederation until the National Flag of Canada 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.

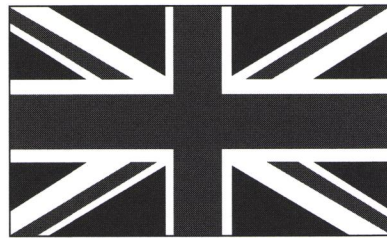


Figure 27

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

### **Precedence – Representing the United Kingdom**

When representing the United Kingdom as a sovereign nation, the Union Jack takes precedence before a Canadian provincial/territorial flag (Figure 28);

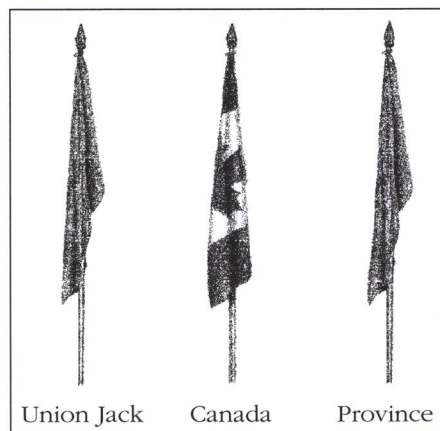
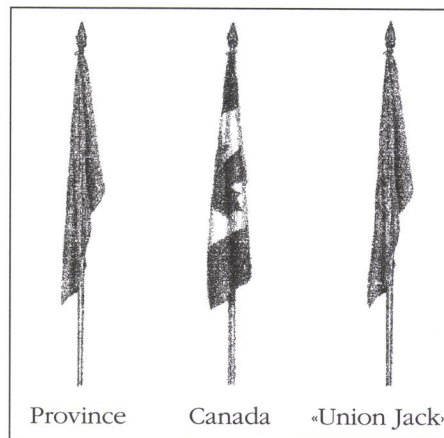


Figure 28



## **Precedence – Representing Canada’s Membership in the Commonwealth or Allegiance to the Crown**

When representing Canada’s membership in the Commonwealth or allegiance to the Crown, for example during a Royal Visit, the Union Jack will take precedence after a Canadian provincial/territorial flag (Figure 29).



*Figure 29*

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 (Victoria Day, the Monday preceding May 25);
- the anniversary of the adoption of the Statute of Westminster (December 11); and
- the date of the official observance of Commonwealth Day (the second Monday in March).

“Physical arrangements” means the existence of at least two flagpoles. The Canadian flag will always take precedence and will not be replaced by the Union Jack.

The Union Jack may be flown with the Canadian flag at the National War Memorial and at similarly appropriate federal locations in Canada in connection with ceremonies marking anniversaries of events in which Canadian forces participated with other Commonwealth forces.

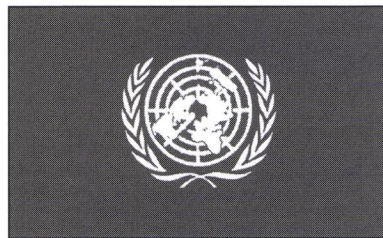


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## **Chapter 5** *Flags of International Organizations*

### **The United Nations**

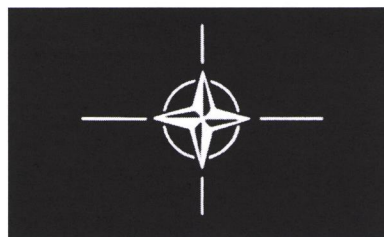
The United Nations Flag is flown with the National Flag of Canada on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on United Nations Day, October 24, and by special arrangement on other occasions including visits to Ottawa by the Secretary General of the United Nations or his representative (Figure 30).



*Figure 30*

### **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

NATO is Canada's first peacetime military alliance, placing the nation in a defensive military arrangement with the United States, the nations of Western Europe, and Turkey. The treaty was signed on April 4, 1949. There is no specific day when the NATO Flag is flown (Figure 31).



*Figure 31*



## The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Flag is flown with the National Flag of Canada on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Commonwealth Day (the second Monday in March).

The Commonwealth Flag consists of the Commonwealth Symbol in gold on a blue background. The symbol consists of a radial grating forming the letter “C” surrounding a circular solid on which are super-imposed five latitudinal and five longitudinal lines to represent the globe. The Symbol is centered on the rectangle and the dimensions of the rectangle are 2:1. There is no significance in the number of rays and they do not seek to represent the number of countries within the Commonwealth (Figure 32).

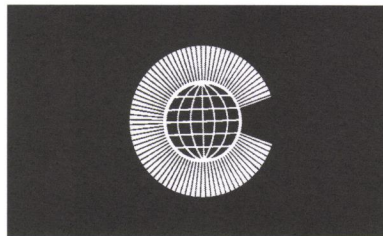


Figure 32

## *La Francophonie*

The spherical form of the flag of *La Francophonie* conveys the idea of bringing together. The five rings leaning against each other represent the concept of working and co-operating with one another. The five colours represent the various colours found on the flags of the participating countries and governments, providing an international dimension to the symbol and recalling the five continents where the members of *La Francophonie* are located (Figure 33).

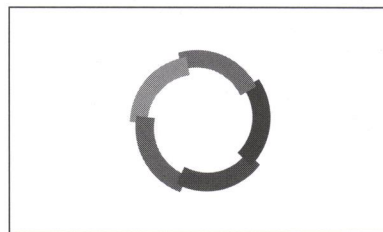


Figure 33