

Canadian honours

An exclusively Canadian honours system was introduced in 1967 with the establishment of the Order of Canada. The honours system was enlarged in 1972 with the addition of the Order of Military Merit and three decorations to be awarded in recognition of acts of bravery.

The Order of Canada, instituted on July 1, 1967, the 100th anniversary of Confederation, is designed to honour Canadians for outstanding achievement and service to their country or to humanity at large. Originally, two levels of membership were provided: Companions of the Order and recipients of the Medal of Service. The order was revised in 1972 and now comprises three categories of membership: companions, officers — which includes all those who received the Medal of Service — and members. The last category is intended especially to recognize service in a locality or in a particular field of activity. Not more than 15 persons may be appointed in any one year as companions and the total number of companions is not to exceed 150. Officers of the order may be appointed to the number of 40 persons a year and up to 80 persons may be appointed yearly as members.

All members of the order are entitled to have letters placed after their names as follows: for the companion CC, for the officer OC and for the member CM.

The Queen is sovereign of the order and the Governor General holds office as chancellor and principal companion. Appointments to the order are made, with the Queen's approval, by the Governor General assisted by an advisory council which meets twice a year under the chairmanship of the chief justice of Canada. Members of the advisory council include the clerk of the Privy Council, the under-secretary of state, the chairman of the Canada Council, the president of the Royal Society of Canada, the president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and not more than two other members who may be appointed by the Governor General from among members of the order.

While Canadians are the primary recipients of the order, the constitution provides that persons who are not Canadian citizens and whom Canada desires to honour may be appointed as honorary members at any of the three levels of membership.

The Order of Military Merit has been established to provide a means of recognizing conspicuous merit and exceptional service by members of the Canadian Armed Forces, both regular and reserve. The order has three levels of membership: commander (CMM), officer (OMM) and member (MMM).

The Queen is the sovereign of the order and the Governor General is the chancellor as well as a commander of the order. The chief of the defence staff is the principal commander of the order. Appointments to the order are made by the Governor General on the recommendation of the minister of national defence; nominations are made by the chief of the defence staff assisted by an advisory committee for the order.

The number of appointments made annually will vary, depending on the number of nominations submitted and approved. The order's constitution stipulates, however, that the total number of appointments made annually will not exceed a tenth of one per cent of the forces' average strength. Members of foreign armed forces who render particularly meritorious service to Canada or the Canadian Armed Forces in the course of their military duties may be made honorary members of the order at any of the three levels.

Canadian bravery decorations. A Medal of Courage was included in the Order of Canada in 1967 but it was found that a single medal would not serve to recognize in an equitable manner acts of bravery which entail varying degrees of risk. Consequently, no awards were made and the medal has now been superseded by a series of three decorations: the Cross of Valour (CV), the Star of Courage (SC) and the Medal of Bravery (MB). Instances of extraordinary heroism in circumstances of extreme peril will be marked with the award of the Cross of Valour; other outstandingly courageous actions may qualify for the award of the Star of Courage or the Medal of Bravery. The bravery decorations are awarded with the approval of the sovereign by the Governor General on the advice of a decorations advisory committee. They may be awarded to civilians, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and of the protective services, and may be awarded posthumously.

Honours and decorations announced in 1977 and January 1978 and the dates of appointment of their recipients are as follows.

ORDER OF CANADA

Appointed July 11, 1977

Companions

The Honourable George Alexander Gale,
CC, QC

Roland Giroux, CC "elevated"
The Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, PC, CC