

The Order of Military Merit



Christopher McCreery

Message by
Her Majesty The Queen

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1-877-741-8332

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A-DH-300-000/JD-003

Cat. No. D2-301/2012

ISBN 978-1-100-54293-5



Canada

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Dedication



**To the members of the Order of Military Merit
who have made it their life's work to defend
Crown and country.**

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada,
wearing her insignia of Sovereign of the Order of
Canada and of the Order of Military Merit, in the
Tent Room at Rideau Hall, Canada Day 2010





BUCKINGHAM PALACE

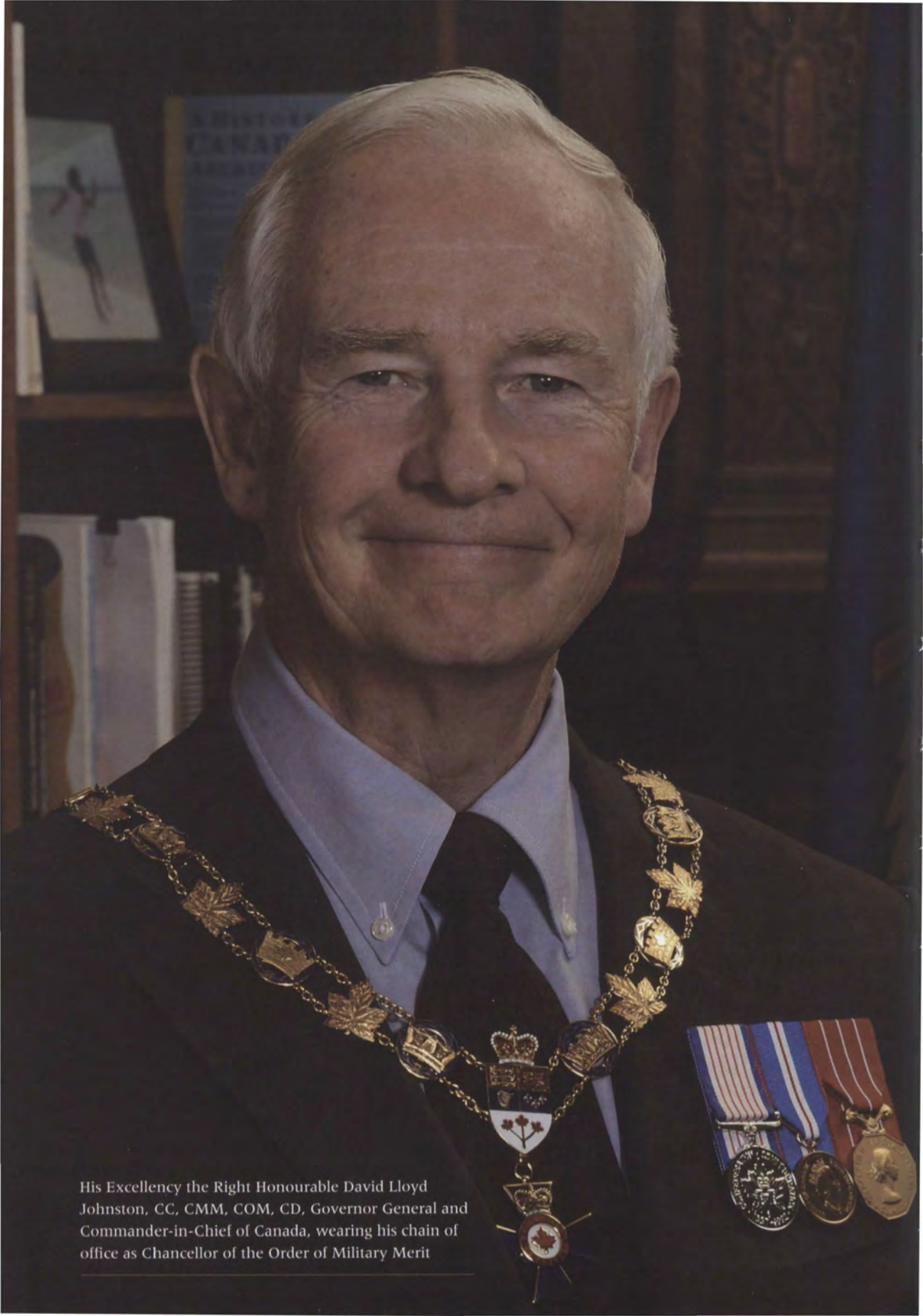
It is with great pleasure that I note that 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the institution of the Order of Military Merit. In this the 60th year of my reign as Queen of Canada, it is most gratifying for me to share an important anniversary year with so many outstanding members of the Canadian Forces who have been honoured through this Order over the past four decades.

My pride in approving the creation of this honour in 1972 is only exceeded by my pride in the men and women of the Canadian Forces who go about their onerous tasks on a daily basis with such diligence, fervour and commitment. In this regard, the Order of Military Merit was then and remains now a most appropriate way of recognizing the conspicuous merit and exceptional service of those who proudly wear the uniform of Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

To those who have been appointed and promoted in the Order, I commend you for your professional and dedicated service. Your membership in this society of merit recognizes the best qualities of the military profession and makes you models that all others would do well to emulate.

As founding Sovereign of the Order, I am pleased that this authoritative work is not only a record of its history and development but also a tangible testament to its members who have offered such exceptional service. The Order of Military Merit is now widely recognized and respected as a central element of the Canadian Honours System. In this context, it is my fervent hope that this work will be seen and used widely as an appropriate homage to the many men and women who have been so honoured for distinguished service to Crown and country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth II", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.



His Excellency the Right Honourable David Lloyd Johnston, CC, CMM, COM, CD, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada, wearing his chain of office as Chancellor of the Order of Military Merit



THE GOVERNOR GENERAL • LE GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL

As chancellor, it is an honour to mark the 40th anniversary of the Order of Military Merit, and to pay tribute to the dedication and excellence of Canadian Forces members. Since 1972, the Order has served as a showcase of remarkable achievements and contributions from within our military, highlighting exemplary conduct for all to see.

In my role as commander-in-chief of Canada, I have the great privilege of meeting regularly with our men and women in uniform and of celebrating their service to Canada.

I am often struck by the strength of the bond that unites the Canadian Forces. Each member plays a different role, but all are drawn together by a common purpose and set of values—and by wonderful camaraderie. This close connection within the ranks is one reason why individual conduct is so significant, and why the Order is such a powerful symbol of excellence. The Canadian Forces is a unique family, and, as in any family, role models are important.

The Order of Military Merit exists to celebrate the individual actions that are the living spirit of Canadian military professionalism. This honour speaks to the pride that peers, commanding officers and Canadians all have in our military. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to express my own gratitude for the excellence and service of its recipients.

David Johnston



General Walter John Natynczyk, CMM, MSC, CD, Chief of the Defence Staff, wearing his chain of office as Principal Commander of the Order of Military Merit

Chief of the Defence Staff



Chef d'état-major de la Défense

National Defence
Headquarters
Ottawa, Ontario
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Quartier général de
la Défense nationale
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0K2

The members of the Order of Military Merit are the finest representation of the Canadian Forces. They have all demonstrated, over many years, the best qualities of our military tradition. Whether they demonstrated outstanding leadership, innovated, led operations at home and abroad or provided vital support, they serve as tremendous examples each in their own field.

The 40th anniversary of the creation of this signal honour is an appropriate time not only to reflect on the history of this distinguished institution, but more importantly to renew our recognition of those select few who have been admitted to the Order for their loyal and dedicated military service to Queen and country.

Be proud to be a member of this august group, as only one in every thousand members of the Canadian Forces is admitted in any given year. The criteria are exacting and the selection processes rigorous. This speaks to the consistently high standard of members who have been appointed or promoted in the Order since 1972.

At 40 years, our Order remains relatively young when compared to its equivalents in other nations. We must continue to strive to make the membership of the Order more representative of all domains of the Canadian Forces and ensure it continues to be a worthy and achievable goal in a military career at any level.

As Principal Commander of the Order of Military Merit, I am delighted that Dr. McCreery has once again traced a detailed and vivid portrait of one of our military honours through this new publication. I am sure that all members of the Canadian Forces, and many others, will enjoy learning more about our national military order.

I salute all members of the Order, serving and retired, and invite them to join me in celebrating this important milestone in our Order's history.

General Walter John Natynczyk, CMM, MSC, CD
Chief of the Defence Staff and
Principal Commander of the Order of Military Merit



National
Defence

Défense
nationale

Canada

Frontispiece

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 Reserves.

Press Release announcing the establishment of the
Order of Military Merit
31 May 1972

As I am sure you know, the Canadian Forces are delighted with the announcement of the institution of the Order of Military Merit and I take great pleasure in extending on their behalf as well as my own our sincerest congratulations on your appointment as the first Chancellor of the Order.

The Honourable Edgar J. Benson, PC, MP,
Minister of National Defence to
The Right Honourable Roland Michener, PC, CC, CMM, CD,
Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada
12 June 1972

Author's Note

In the writing of this work the author, by the terms of his commission, was given full access to all relevant documents extant, in the possession of the Canadian Forces, and those documents related to the Order of Military Merit held at Library and Archives Canada, the Department of National Defence, the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General and The National Archives in the United Kingdom. The facts used by him have been verified from official sources, but he was left free to select and arrange the material. The inferences drawn and opinions expressed are those of the author himself.



General Jacques Alfred Dextraze, CC, CMM, CBE, DSO, CD, receives his insignia of Commander of the Order of Military Merit from His Excellency the Right Honourable Daniel Roland Michener, PC, CC, CMM, CD, QC, at the very first investiture of the Order, Rideau Hall, 21 January 1973

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Her Majesty The Queen, Sovereign of the Order of Military Merit, for providing a message at the beginning of this book. Her 60 years of service to Canada are an enduring example to all those who serve in her name.

As Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada and Chancellor of the Order of Military Merit, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Lloyd Johnston, CC, CMM, COM, CD, was very kind to supply a message on this occasion.

I am deeply honoured that the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Walter Natynczyk, CMM, MSC, CD, commissioned me to undertake this work about the history of our national military order.

A number of heralds from the Canadian Heraldic Authority provided valuable assistance: the Chief Herald of Canada, Dr. Claire Boudreau; Rideau Herald Emeritus Robert D. Watt, LVO; the Deputy Chief Herald of Canada, Bruce Patterson; and Assiniboine Herald Darrel Kennedy. At the Chancellery of Honours, Anna Laperle assisted with questions related to a number of policy issues.

A cadre of friends were extremely supportive throughout the writing of this modest work: Joyce Byrant, CM, BEM; General John de Chastelain, OC, CMM, CD, CH (Retired); Lieutenant(N) Scott Nelson, MVO; Lieutenant-Colonel Dan MacKay, OMM, CD, AdeC (Retired); Lieutenant-Colonel Fran Chilton-MacKay, OMM, MSM, CD; Kevin MacLeod, CVO, CD; Alana Blouin; and Julie Culliton.

In Halifax a number of serving members of the Canadian Forces—Captain(N) Craig Walkington, MSM, CD; Lieutenant-Colonel Dale Warner, CD, AdeC; Lieutenant(N) Drew Graham, CD, AdeC—all showed a keen interest in the development of this book.

I am grateful to a variety of people from the Directorate of Honours and Recognition; notably, Lieutenant-Colonel André Levesque, OMM, CD (Retired); Julianne Martin; Patrick Berrea, MSM, CD; Sergeant Jonathon Pye; Louise Côté, CD; Aliria Mullen; and Lieutenant-Commander David Thompson, CD, were quite helpful with this work. In addition, of special note is Major Carl Gauthier, MMM, CD, AdeC, who devised the idea of this project in 2005 and helped shepherd its development.

Special thanks are owed to Colonel Michael Barr, OMM, CD (Retired), the first member of the Order that I ever came to know. His love of the Canadian Forces, the Royal Canadian Regiment and military history was imparted to me at a young age, for which I remain grateful. Roger de C. Nantel, LVO, CD, first Registrar of Canadian Honours, was of great help in offering part of the unwritten history of the Order that only one of the builders of the Canadian honours system could provide. Honorary Colonel John Blatherwick, CM, OBC, CD, a fellow historian of the Canadian honours system, was extremely generous and helpful in sharing with DH&R his extensive research related to Canadian appointments to the Order of the British Empire. Thanks are also owed to Karen Collins from the Department of National Defence, who assisted with finding a wide variety of documents late on a summer Friday afternoon. The Department is also grateful to Gabrielle Lappa of the Chancellery of Honours, who authorized the photographic recording of the manufacturing of the insignia with their contractor, and also made arrangements with her staff for the provision of the data required to create the register of all members appointed since 1972. The Department is also grateful to Mike Bond of Bond-Boyd & Co. Ltd., who graciously gave his time to allow a military photographer to record the many steps involved in making the insignia of the Order. Lieutenant-General James C. Gervais, CMM, CD (Retired); Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Beauregard, OMM, MBE, CD (Retired); Mark Reid, CD; and Glen Hodgins also provided objects that were photographed for this work.

The author is grateful to the Department of National Defence for the opportunity to undertake this important project. Throughout all of my various projects related to the Canadian honours system, the Department has been unwavering in its support and willingness to assist.

Lastly, heartfelt thanks are owed to my parents, Paul and Sharon, who have now endured the writing and publishing of 10 books. Their support and interest remains highly valued and appreciated.

Christopher McCreery, MVO
Government House
H A L I F A X

Introduction

Dating back to the French regime, the Crown has sought to recognize outstanding meritorious military service in the defence of the realm. While the Crown has moved from being a French, to a British and today a Canadian Crown, this desire to recognize military excellence remains relevant.

Canada is not unique in having a specific order to recognize outstanding military service. In few professions is the bestowal of official recognition so important as it is to those who place their lives in danger in the defence of their country. Much more than a tool to enhance morale, honours serve as a public, official and lasting thank you on behalf of the Crown to members of the Canadian Forces. In many ways the inspiration for the Order of Military Merit is taken from France's *Légion d'honneur* and Britain's Order of the Bath and Order of the British Empire, both honours which have, at various times, been bestowed upon Canadians.

We should not underestimate the importance of honours. In reflecting upon their importance, Napoleon astutely noted "you call them toys; know that by these toys people are led."¹

The establishment of the Order of Military Merit is closely linked to the creation of the Canadian honours system, so it is not surprising that the Order of Canada, and the example set by it, has played an important role in the development of the Order of Military Merit. The first Secretary General of the Order, Esmond Butler, noted that the Order of Military Merit should in no way be viewed as being less important or less prestigious than the Order of Canada, for it recognized service of equal importance and significance.

The creation of the Order of Military Merit brought with it the restructuring of the Order of Canada into the three levels we know today: Companion, Officer and Member; and also the creation of the three Canadian Decorations for Bravery: the Cross of Valour, Star of Courage and Medal of Bravery. Symbolically, these three groups of honours have much in common, and the addition of the Order of Military Merit and Decorations for Bravery to the Canadian honours system in 1972 greatly enhanced the breadth and level of recognition afforded to citizens.

It is highly unlikely that Canada would have a fully functional and extensive national honours system today were it not for the role played by members of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in

the 1950s and 1960s to encourage the establishment of a national honours system. Civilians, politicians in particular, had long been petrified of discussing honours in the public sphere, let alone proposing the creation of an honours system composed of civil and military orders, decorations and medals. The military was, however, in a different position, long accustomed to being recognized with honours for their service. The flow of civil and military honours came to an end following the Second World War, only to be reactivated briefly, in relation to military honours for service in the Korean War. By 1954, other than the Canadian Forces' Decoration (CD), the RCMP Long Service Medal and the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, no honours were being bestowed upon Canadians, either civil or military. At the time, Canada was almost unique in the world for not recognizing meritorious service. Despite being active in a variety of United Nations missions and committed to NATO in Western Europe and to NORAD in North America, no recognition was accorded for service beyond the CD. This placed Canadians in a very awkward position in relation to our allies.

The situation was not one of the military wanting more colourful ribbons to decorate their chests,

Canada's honours system is one of the most extensive and representative in the world

but rather was born of a desire to see some form of official recognition established to recognize meritorious service. In the 1950s most members of the Canadian military had some experience with the honours system through the receipt of war service medals or a long service medal, so the virtual end to military honours was acutely felt amongst those with even a modest period of service.

It was the military, dating back to the concluding months of the Second World War, that kept interest in developing a Canadian honours system alive, even at a time when many officials shunned such developments. Proposals ranged from a more robust use of British honours in Canada to the partial or complete establishment of an indigenous system of orders, decorations and medals. This was particularly fitting given that the root of all Western honours systems can be found in military service. Long before the concept of recognizing service in civil society developed in the late 18th century, honours were almost entirely focused on military service and great deeds on the battlefield.

Today, Canada's honours system is one of the most extensive and representative in the world, according due recognition to citizens, both civilian and members of the Canadian Forces, for acts of valour, bravery, meritorious service, volunteerism and long service. The Order of Military Merit has a special place in this system as

one of the founding elements, and a recognizable token of the Crown's esteem for outstanding meritorious service in Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

The 40-year mark is an appropriate occasion to reflect upon the origins and development of the Order of Military Merit. No doubt on the occasion of the 75th or centennial anniversary of the Order's creation, similar albeit more extensive works will be commissioned. Nevertheless, it is important to tell the story of the Order today, to honour those who have been admitted to it since 1972, and to better place the Order into the context of the overall Canadian honours system as the premier mark of recognition for outstanding military service. It has become all too customary to focus largely on the Order of Canada, which is generally presented as the principal honour of our country; yet this is a half-truth, for it is the Order of Military Merit that recognizes similarly outstanding services in the military field. Canadians have much to be proud of in their military, its history and continuing accomplishments, and the Order of Military Merit has, for the past generation, sought to recognize our most outstanding sailors, soldiers, airmen and airwomen. Just over 4,000 Canadians have been appointed to the Order since it was established by Her Majesty The Queen in 1972, and this book tells the story of the honour they have helped to shape and imbue with meaning.

A colleague who has spent many years studying the honours bestowed upon Canadians wisely quoted Benjamin Disraeli at the opening of one of his more recent books: "An author who speaks about his own books is almost as bad as a mother who talks about her own children."² Much of the story of the Order of Military Merit is intertwined with the history of the Order of Canada and Canadian honours in general; thus it has been difficult not to either reproduce sections from previous books, or simply make excessive reference to them. Thankfully, recently uncovered documentation related to the establishment of the Canadian honours system adds a new dimension to the chronology and story of how the Order of Canada and Order of Military Merit came into being, and extensive quotation of previous works has been unnecessary. We now have a much more detailed picture of how our honours system developed from the early proposals for a national order of merit, consisting of a civil and military division, and what ultimately evolved into the Order of Canada and Order of Military Merit.

Chapter One

Military Orders in Canada

That His Majesty's subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada be eligible for the awards of Honours and Decorations, including awards in the Orders of Chivalry.

Report of the Special Committee
on Honours and Decorations, 1942

The Order of Military Merit finds its distant roots in the two European honours systems that were used at various times in Canada prior to the establishment of the Order of Canada in 1967. It is from both the French and British tradition of honours that Canada, along with most countries around the globe, derived the general structure and purpose of their honours systems.³ While the honours examined in this chapter predate the formal establishment of what is known today as the Canadian Forces, it is important to recount the Canadian military experience with orders of chivalry to better place the Order of Military Merit into the context of official recognition throughout our history.

In the French and British orders of chivalry, we can discern the desire to recognize meritorious service and dedication to duty, although in a much more limited sense than has been achieved by the Order of Military Merit. Prior to the creation of the Order, the bestowal of recognition for meritorious service was entirely limited to a small class of senior officers, non-commissioned members (NCMs) being excluded. Privates, Leading Seamen and Flight Sergeants were not recognized with orders of chivalry or merit, which were reserved for the gentleman officer class and those of a certain rank. A gradual balancing of this approach to recognizing meritorious service began in 1917 with the establishment of the Order of the British Empire, and those holding appointments as Petty Officers and Warrant Officers became eligible and were appointed to the Member level of this new Order. Canadian servicemen, and later women, were eligible for a variety of bravery, gallantry and war service medals; however, the focus here is on the orders of chivalry that predate the creation of the Order of Military Merit.

The first honours bestowed upon Canadians came from the King of France, who had dominion over New France and Acadia, or what today makes up parts of Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The King had the ability to elevate French subjects to nobility as dukes, marquises, counts and barons. Charles Le Moyne, Seigneur de Longueuil, was made Baron de Longueuil in recognition of his military contributions and peace negotiations with the Iroquois on behalf of the French Crown. Le Moyne later became Governor of Montreal and his descendents continue to carry the title of Baron de Longueuil.⁴



Charles Le Moyne, Baron de Longueuil



King Louis XIV

King Louis XIV established the *Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint-Louis* in April 1693. This was the first multi-leveled military order that was not a religious order.⁵ The *Croix de Saint-Louis*, as it colloquially became known, was awarded in three grades: Grand Cross (*Grand Croix*), limited to eight living members; Commander (*Commandeur*), limited to 24 living members; and Knight (*Chevalier*), with no limit on membership.⁶ Membership was restricted to military officers who were Roman Catholics. Protestant men were eligible for the *Ordre du mérite militaire*, although this was not established until 1759, just prior to the fall of New France.⁷

The membership of the *Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint-Louis* included French Canadian-born officers living in Canada as well as Canadian-born officers serving in France during and following the fall of New France in 1759. Approximately 300 people associated with Canada were appointed to the Order, including 145 who



18th century engraving depicting the insignia of the *Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint-Louis*, better known as the *Croix de Saint-Louis*



Insignia of Commander
of the *Ordre de Saint-Louis*



Insignia of Grand Cross
of the *Ordre de Saint-Louis*



Insignia of Knight of the
Ordre de Saint-Louis (obverse)



(reverse)



Insignia of Knight of the
Ordre du mérite militaire



Louis-Hector de Callière



François Coulon de Villiers

were recognized for service in Canada. The first person associated with Canada to be appointed to the Order was the Governor of Montreal, Louis-Hector de Callière, in 1694. Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac and Governor of New France, was the second in 1697. The best-known Canadian subject to receive the *Croix de Saint-Louis* was François Coulon de Villiers. Born in Verchères, New France in 1712, Coulon de Villiers went on to serve with great distinction in the French colonial army. He became the only man ever to defeat George Washington in battle. The last Governor General of New France, Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal, was the only Canadian to receive the Grand Cross.

The *Croix de Saint-Louis* was abolished by convention in 1792 following the French Revolution, although it continued to be used by the Royalist French Government in exile, only to be revived when the French monarchy was restored in 1814, being once again abolished by King Louis Philippe in 1830. Under Napoleon, the Order was replaced by the *Légion d'honneur*, which continues to be France's premier honour to this day.

It was then British honours that served as Canada's honours until 1967, and these remain familiar to



Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac. He is depicted here wearing the sash of a Commander of the *Ordre de Saint-Louis*, but as records state he was made a Knight in 1697 and there is no indication he was ever promoted to Commander, this may therefore be an example of artistic licence



Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal, wearing the sash and breast star of a Grand Cross of the *Ordre de Saint-Louis*



Napoleon



An early insignia of the *Légion d'honneur* (1st Empire, 2nd type)



Field Marshal the Right Honourable the Viscount Byng of Vimy, GCB, GCMG, MVO

many Canadians. As with the King of France, the British Sovereign had the ability to summon subjects to the peerage where they would take a title and a seat in the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the British Parliament. Peerages were created in several different grades: Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount and Baron. These were both honours and hereditary positions in the House of Lords. A number of Canadians have been summoned to the House of Lords over the past three centuries, but none, however, for military service. Several of Canada's pre-1952 Governors General were elevated to the peerage in recognition of outstanding military service, the two most prominent being Field Marshal the Viscount Byng of Vimy, who had commanded the Canadian Corps during part of the First World War, and later served as Governor General from 1921 to 1926; and Field Marshal Viscount Alexander of Tunis, who served as Governor General from 1946 to 1952.⁸ Upon departing Canada after five years as the King's representative, Alexander was raised in the peerage to an Earl and received the second title of Baron Rideau of Ottawa and Castle Derg. The Baron Rideau title was bestowed with the consent of the Canadian government, and was largely viewed as a token of thanks for his service as Governor General. Amongst his many honours, Alexander was also the first recipient of the Canadian Forces' Decoration.



Field Marshal the Right Honourable the Earl Alexander of Tunis, KG, PC, GCB, OM, GCMG, CSI, DSO, MC, CD, ADC



King James I



Badge of a Baronet of Nova Scotia

In the general gradation of honours, next came Baronets. The Baronetage was established by King James I of England in 1611 and later extended to Scotland in 1624 as the Baronets of Nova Scotia. This honour was created on a subscription basis in an effort to colonize Nova Scotia. In 1707 the Baronets of Nova Scotia were merged with the Baronetage of Great Britain, later the Baronetage of the United Kingdom. Baronets were entitled to the style "Sir" and this was passed down to male descendants. Prior to Confederation, a number of Canadians were made Baronets of the United Kingdom, notably General Sir William Fenwick Williams. Williams was born in Nova Scotia and went on to serve with distinction in the British Army, rising to the rank of General, and in later life being Commander-in-Chief of Canada while serving as Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia. In recognition of his gallant conduct in the Crimean War, while in command of Turkish troops against the Russians, Williams was created "Baronet of Kars" in honour of his pivotal role in the Siege of Kars, the last major engagement of the Crimean War. Uniquely, Williams was also given the title of Pasha by the Sultan of Turkey. In the civilian realm, notable Canadian Baronets later included Sir George-Étienne Cartier, leading French Canadian Father of Confederation, and newspaper magnate Sir Max Aitkin, Lord Beaverbrook.



General Sir William Fenwick Williams, GCB, the first Baronet of Kars. Here he wears the honours he received shortly after his victories in the Crimean War and they include, among other insignia, those of Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (Military Division), Companion of the Order of the Bath (Civil Division), Grand Officer of the French *Légion d'honneur* and the Turkish Order of the Medjidie 1st Class. He was promoted from KCB to GCB in 1871



Sir George-Étienne Cartier, PC, the first Baronet of Montreal



The Right Honourable Sir William Maxwell "Max" Aitken, first Baron Beaverbrook, who was initially the first Baronet Beaverbrook



Insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (Military Division)



Insignia of Companion of the Order of the Bath (Military Division)



Breast star of a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (Military Division). The insignia of that grade also includes a neck badge similar to a CB but slightly larger and with an ornamented suspension ring

In the post-Confederation period, four orders were used to recognize military service in Canada and other parts of the British Empire. These are the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and the Distinguished Service Order.⁹ With the exception of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), the top two levels of each of these Orders conferred the accolade of knighthood, entitling the holder to the designation “Sir” before their name. The DSO is a single-class order made up of Companions.

The Order of the Bath was founded by King George I in 1725 as a single-level military order consisting of Knights of the Bath (KB). In 1815, a civil division was added to the Order and the military division was restructured into three levels: Knight Grand Cross (GCB), Knight Commander (KCB) and Companion (CB). By 1847, the civil division was restructured to mirror its military counterpart, being divided into three levels.¹⁰ Appointments to the military division were made in recognition of service of the highest caliber and nominees had to have been Mentioned in Despatches. Those appointed to the Order generally start at the CB level and can later be elevated to KCB and GCB, respectively. Officers holding the rank of Major or Commander and above were eligible for appointment to the Order, with KCBs being awarded primarily to those holding the rank of Major-General and above, and GCBs being bestowed upon Lieutenant-Generals, Generals and Field Marshals.

No member of the Canadian Militia was ever appointed a GCB, although Canadians serving in the British Army did receive this honour, notably General Sir William Fenwick Williams and General Sir Gordon Drummond. Eight members of the Canadian Militia were made KCBs, with General Sir Arthur Currie and Victoria Cross holder Lieutenant-General Richard Turner being the most prominent, both in recognition of services rendered during the First World War. During the South African War (1899–1902), five Canadians were made Companions; the First World War saw 43 Canadians appointed CBs: two during the interwar period, 33 during the Second World War and one to Brigadier John Rockingham for service in Korea.



General Sir Arthur William Currie,
GCMG, KCB, VD



Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Ernest William Turner, VC, KCB, KCMG, DSO



Insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. The sash and pendant badge and the star are here surrounded with the collar of the Order



Brigadier (later Major-General) John Meredith Rockingham, CB, CBE, DSO



Insignia of Companion of the Order
of St. Michael and St. George



Insignia of Knight Commander of the Order
of St. Michael and St. George (the reverse
of the neck badge is illustrated here)

Until the end of the First World War the Order of St. Michael and St. George, which was the principal order for recognizing civil and military service outside the United Kingdom, was employed to recognize several hundred members of the Canadian Militia and Royal Canadian Navy. Established in 1818, like the Order of the Bath, the Order of St. Michael and St. George had three levels: Knight Grand Cross (GCMG), Knight Commander (KCMG) and Companion (CMG). This Order began its life with the very narrow focus of recognizing residents of the Ionian Island and Malta for their loyalty and service during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1868, the Order was greatly expanded to recognize service in the fields of foreign affairs and service in Britain's overseas

Dominions, colonies and territories.¹¹ The statutory limits on membership in the Order of the Bath had been reached and an additional vehicle for recognizing outstanding services had been found in the repurposed Order of St. Michael and St. George.

Interestingly, the first subjects appointed under the new provisions were all Canadians or associated with the young Dominion. Viscount Monck, the last Governor General of British North America and first Governor General of Canada, was made a GCMG; Sir Charles Hastings Doyle, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, was made a KCMG; and Francis Hincks, the Canadian-born former Governor of Barbados, was made a CMG.¹² The Order was used to recognize both civil and military service, and like the Order of the Bath, appointments of military and naval personnel were limited to officers only.

The Order of St. Michael and St. George was used to recognize a total of 187 Canadians for military service from the Fenian Raids until the end of the First World War. Four Canadians were made CMGs for service in the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870 and a further three were appointed for service during the Red River Rebellion of 1870. The South African War saw six officers in the Canadian Militia appointed Companions of the Order.¹³ It was during the First World War that the largest number of appointments was made, this at a time when the Order was used as a junior Order of the Bath to alleviate the pressure on the latter. Military appointments to the Order of St. Michael and St. George were greatly reduced after 1917, when the Order of the British Empire was created and the CBE took on the role as the junior CB from that point. In the meantime, two CMGs went to officers in the Royal Canadian Navy and 170 to officers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). The only GCMG



The Right Honourable the
Viscount Monck, GCMG

appointment made in recognition of military service appropriately went to General Sir Arthur Currie. Six General Officers in the CEF were appointed KCMG, the list of which includes Major-General Sir Sam Steele.¹⁴

No further appointments to the Order of St. Michael and St. George were made to members of the Canadian military for military services during the interwar period or the Second World War, although the CMG continued to be used to recognize senior Canadian public servants until 1946. Appointments continue to be made to this Order in the United Kingdom and a number of the Queen's other Realms, primarily in recognition of service in foreign and Commonwealth affairs.

The honour most frequently awarded to Canadians, both civilian and military, in the pre-1967 period was the Order of the British Empire. This Order was established by King George V in 1917 and was initially used to recognize outstanding service in the Great War. The Order consisted of a civil and military division (from 1918) and followed the French model of five levels: Knight/Dame Grand Cross (GBE), Knight/Dame Commander (KBE/DBE), Commander (CBE), Officer (OBE) and Member (MBE). In addition to the five levels, there was also the Medal of the Order of the British Empire, which would be replaced by the Empire Gallantry Medal (EGM) and the British Empire Medal (BEM) in 1922.¹⁵ This was by far the most egalitarian and representative of the various orders of chivalry that Canadians were eligible to



Major-General Sir Samuel Benfield Steele, KCMG, CB, MVO



His Majesty King George V



Insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire 1st type



Insignia of Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (Civil Division) 1st type





Insignia of Officer of the Order of the British Empire (Military Division) 1st type



Insignia of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (Civil Division) 1st type



Insignia of Member of the Order of the British Empire (Military Division) 1st type



The Empire Gallantry Medal (Civil Division with 2nd type ribbon) showing the silver laurel branch added in 1933 to distinguish it further from the BEM



The British Empire Medal (Military Division with 2nd type ribbon)

be appointed to. There was still a direct connection between rank and level of appointment. In Canada, CBEs went to Flag and Field Officers, OBEs to those holding the rank of Lieutenant-Commander/Major/Squadron Leader, and MBEs to those holding rank above Lieutenant/Flight Lieutenant. The British Empire Medal was typically awarded to Warrant Officers, Petty Officers, NCOs and ratings. In a few rare instances, Petty Officers and Warrant Officers were appointed as MBEs.



Sir Frederick Grant Banting, KBE, MC

No members of the RCN, Canadian Army or RCAF were ever appointed to the top level of the Order of the British Empire, the GBE. Two members of the CEF, Major George McLaren Brown, European Manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell Stuart, were both appointed military KBEs at the end of the First World War. Brown was deeply involved in the transportation of Allied troops via rail and sea on behalf of the British and Canadian governments, while Stuart was involved with the British Ministry of Information, a propaganda organ. One military-related KBE was Sir Frederick Banting, the co-discoverer of insulin, who was appointed a civilian KBE in 1935.

Banting had served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps during the First World War and would serve in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps during the Second World War up until the time of his death while on active service.

The Korean War resulted in three CBEs being awarded to officers in the Canadian Army. Following the Korean War, all of the Canadian appointments to the Order of the British Empire were made in recognition of gallantry. One of the last appointments to the Order of the British Empire made upon the recommendation of the Government of Canada came in 1964. This was a military CBE to then-Brigadier Jacques Dextraze in recognition of his contribution to the UN Mission in the Congo. Dextraze would go on to become Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), second Principal Commander of the Order of Military Merit, and played a key role in refining the Order of Military Merit in its formative years. The final Canadian to be appointed to the military division of Order of the British Empire came in 1968 when Captain

(Nursing Sister) Josephine A. Cashin of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps was made an MBE with gallantry emblem, in recognition of her bravery in assisting with the rescue effort following the crash of a Czechoslovakian State Airline plane near Gander International Airport in September 1967.

Table 1.1
Appointments of members of the Canadian military (those under Canadian military command only) to the military division of the Order of the British Empire, 1917–1968

Level	First World War	Interwar	Second World War	Post-War	Korea	Post-Korea	Total
GBE	0	0	*	*	*	*	0
KBE	0	0	*	*	*	*	0
CBE	52	2	202	0	3	1	260
OBE	257	4	760	0	21	1	1,043
MBE	102	6	1,671	2	59	5	1,845
BEM	1	2	1,143	5	27	10	1,188
Total	412	14	3,776	7	110	17	4,336

An asterisk () has been used to indicate periods when Canadians were not eligible to be appointed to the top two levels of the Order of the British Empire.*

Lastly, there was the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). Created by Queen Victoria in 1886, this is a single-level order. Appointments were limited to officers who had rendered “distinguished services under fire or under conditions equivalent to services in actual combat with the enemy.”¹⁶ The DSO is peculiar in many ways. Although it is an actual order with statutes and officials, to which people are appointed as Companions as opposed to being ‘awarded’ it, it is treated in a fashion similar to decorations in that bars can be awarded (since 1916) for further actions that would have warranted a subsequent appointment. Also peculiar is the fact that its purpose was two-fold: first as a gallantry award, second only to the Victoria Cross, for officers; and second as an award for leadership in combat, also limited to



Insignia of the Distinguished Service Order



The Royal Red Cross



The Associate Royal Red Cross

officers. For a period during the First World War, a number of DSOs were awarded for non-combat related services, but the rules were tightened from 1917. From the Sudan campaign to Korea, 1,220 Canadians have been appointed to the DSO, and 119 first bars and 20 second bars have been awarded to them.¹⁷ The DSO continues to be awarded to members of the British Armed Forces; however, since 1993, it has only been awarded for outstanding military leadership during active operations by members of all ranks, while the gallantry aspect (second to the Victoria Cross) is now recognized by the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.

Of peripheral interest, one final honour used within the British honours system that recognized both meritorious service and bravery was the Royal Red Cross (RRC). Although not an order *per se*, it had much in common with the DSO. It was instituted in 1883 by Queen Victoria to recognize a fully trained nurse "who has shown exceptional devotion and competency in the performance of actual nursing duties, over a continuous and long period, or who has performed some very exceptional act of bravery and devotion at her post of duty."¹⁸ A second class, the Associate Royal Red Cross (ARRC), was added in 1915. When the holder of an ARRC was awarded the honour for a second time they became an RRC, so in many ways this honour was similar to an order of chivalry in that you could not hold two appointments in the same division of an order simultaneously.¹⁹ The RRC held a senior place in the Order of Precedence for wearing orders, decorations and medals, ranking immediately after Members of the Order of the British Empire and before gallantry awards such as the Distinguished Service Cross, Military Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross.²⁰



Nursing Sister Georgina Pope wearing the Royal Red Cross and her Queen's South Africa Medal

Given that all military nurses serving in the Canadian military were women until recent times, the RRC and ARRC were only awarded to women. One Canadian nurse was made an RRC for service in the South African War of 1899–1902, 66 for service in the First World War, 56 for the Second World War and one for Korea. The ARRC was awarded to 275 Canadians during the First World War, 134 in the Second World War and one in the Korean War.

First World War

During the First World War, members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and nascent Royal Canadian Navy were eligible for the Order of the Bath, the Order of St. Michael and St. George, the Distinguished Service Order and, after 1917, the Order of the British Empire. Thus, for officers in the CEF and RCN, there was a range of recognition accorded for meritorious service. For NCMs, there was only the Meritorious Service Medal and the Medal of the Order of the British Empire. This was all in addition to a host of gallantry awards: the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), Military Cross (MC), Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), Air Force Cross (AFC), Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM), Distinguished Service Medal (DSM), Military Medal (MM), Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM), Air Force Medal (AFM) and Albert Medal (AM). Recommendations for military awards were submitted through the military chain of command, with the leadership at the company, brigade and divisional level being involved in the process. The British War Office, in cooperation with the Foreign Office and Colonial Office, coordinated the number of honours available and honours lists were drawn up. Field Commanders also had some scope to make immediate awards in recognition of gallantry.



The 29th Infantry Battalion advancing over "no-man's land" through German barbed wire and heavy fire during the Battle of Vimy Ridge



The 1914-15
Star



The British
War Medal



The Victory
Medal

Quite simply, Canadian government policy towards military honours was to allow those in uniform to accept any honour from The King. The system of nomination and approval for civilian honours was not quite so straightforward, and this is where public discontent over the bestowal of civil honours led to significant changes in what honours Canadians were eligible to receive in the period following the Great War. Despite transpiring nearly a century ago, the debate surrounding honours in Canada continues to form part of Canadian government policy towards honours, and it played a significant role in both stifling and catalyzing the establishment of an indigenous Canadian honours system.²¹

To understand the development of the Canadian policy towards honours, we must look back upon the use of honours in Canada at the time of Confederation, 1867.



The Victoria Cross



The Distinguished Service Cross



The Military Cross



The Distinguished Flying Cross



The Air Force Cross



The Distinguished Conduct Medal



The Conspicuous
Gallantry Medal



The Distinguished
Service Medal



The Military
Medal



The Distinguished
Flying Medal



The Air Force Medal



The Albert Medal

Following Confederation, a general convention emerged whereby the Prime Minister of Canada submitted civil honours lists to the Governor General, who vetted them and submitted them to the Sovereign. The Governor General—who was at that time a British official—also nominated Canadians for both civil and military honours, usually without the knowledge of the Canadian Prime Minister. There were also some instances when the Prime Minister nominated senior Canadian officers for honours, although the normal channel for military nominations was usually through the Minister of Militia and Defence to the Governor General.

This system of informal consultation functioned fairly well until 1901, when controversy arose over the knighting of Thomas Shaughnessy, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Governor General, Lord Minto, suggested to the Prime Minister that Shaughnessy be knighted on account of his services during the 1901 Royal Tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (the future King George V and Queen Mary). Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier opposed the idea on the grounds that Shaughnessy was unpopular with Canadians and certainly no friend of the Prime Minister or his party. Minto, however, disregarded Laurier's advice and sent the nomination forward.

Laurier was furious when Shaughnessy was knighted—it did not help that he learned of the appointment from a newspaper and not the Governor General. By 1902, Laurier had drafted an official policy on honours in Canada through a Cabinet decision.²² It set out that all civil honours, save the Royal Victorian Order, had to be approved by the Prime Minister before any



The Right Honourable the Earl of Minto, KG, PC, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE



The Right Honourable Sir Henri Charles Wilfrid Laurier, PC, GCMG, KC

list could be sent from the Governor General to The King. The Governor General and the British government took their time in replying to Laurier's policy, and while they agreed that the Prime Minister should be involved in reviewing the honours lists and submitting names, they maintained that the Governor General would retain the right to nominate Canadians. The existing policy of having nominations for military honours routed through the Minister of Militia and Defence also continued. This policy remained in place until the Nickle Resolution of 1918 and the Report of the Special Committee on Honours and Titles of 1919.

The First World War brought much social and constitutional change to Canada, and this included the nation's policy towards honours. Prior to the war there had been some opposition to titular honours such as peerages and knighthoods, but aside from the Shaughnessy case, it had been fairly muted. Honours were viewed as necessary, and while there had never been any debate over the necessity of military honours, civil honours, which had been used for patronage purposes from time to time, did bring the broader honours system under close scrutiny. Acceptance of civilian honours changed during the Great War as a result of several high-profile controversies. In 1914 a private member's bill was introduced in the House of Commons that sought to abolish peerages and knighthoods in Canada, but not other honours. This proposal was poorly received and promptly defeated. By 1917, however, the mood had changed.



The Honourable Sir Samuel Hughes, PC, KCB

In particular, two very public scandals over honours induced Parliament to examine the issue. The first involved the 1915 appointment of the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence, Sam Hughes, as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. Hughes had been pilloried in the press over his mishandling of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, most specifically his involvement with the purchase of the Ross rifle. The more serious outrage occurred in 1917 when Sir Hugh Graham, owner of the *Montreal Star* and a staunch imperialist, was elevated to the peerage as Lord Atholstan—against the advice of the Canadian Prime Minister and Governor General. Graham's peerage was so controversial in part because of his highly unpopular right-wing and anti-French-Canadian views, and because of an increasing suspicion amongst Canadians of peerages

and knighthoods. There was the added fact that Graham had done nothing, either in Canada or Britain, to warrant such an appointment.

This was the only time in Canadian history that the British government ignored advice from both a Governor General and Prime Minister. London's disregard of Ottawa's wishes was related to the fact that the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was selling peerages and knighthoods to raise funds for his party.²³ Although the general public was unaware of this, all the evidence now points to Graham having bought his peerage. He was a close friend of Lord Northcliffe and Lord Beaverbrook, who had been involved in similar dealings.

In addition to these events, there was an underlying naïveté about honours in Canada. Peerages and knighthoods were thought to be the same thing—both hereditary—and there was similar confusion regarding the other British orders of chivalry. For instance, when the creation of the Order of the British Empire was announced in 1917, Canadian newspapers announced that 300 Canadians were going to be knighted with the new order. This was obviously not the case, as it was only the two most senior levels of the order (GBE and D/KBE), with a limited number of members, that conferred knighthood. In March 1917, following Graham's elevation to the peerage as Lord Atholstan, Sir Robert Borden drafted a new government policy setting out that all honours must be approved by the Canadian Prime Minister and that no further hereditary honours (peerages or baronetcies) were to be awarded to Canadians. Only a week after this policy was drafted, William Folger Nickle, the Conservative-Unionist MP for Kingston, introduced a resolution in the House of Commons requesting that The King cease awarding peerages to



The Right Honourable Sir Robert
Laird Borden, PC, GCMG, KC
wearing the civil uniform



William Folger Nickle

Canadians. Nickle had no trouble with knighthoods or other honours—only those that had a hereditary quality. Nickle’s resolution was in fact very similar to Borden’s new policy. After lengthy debate, the House of Commons adopted a resolution placing power over recommendation for all honours in the hands of the Canadian Prime Minister, while at the same time asking The King to cease awarding hereditary titles to Canadians. This is what came to be known as the Nickle Resolution, even though Nickle himself voted against the version eventually adopted.

Although the Nickle Resolution was adopted, the debate was far from over. While military awards were conferred, Borden did not send forward any further recommendations for civil honours; he thought the issue was still too contentious to test the new protocol.

Throughout late 1918 and most of 1919, the British press was littered with reports about people purchasing honours. Although this was a problem confined to Britain, many people in Canada assumed that the same practice was followed on this side of the Atlantic as well. Fearing that an avalanche of knighthoods was to accompany the newly created Order of the British Empire, Nickle introduced another motion in April 1919. He was now going after both peerages and knighthoods, a departure from his original opposition to hereditary honours only. Following another lengthy debate that in many ways mirrored the one in 1918, the House of Commons voted to create a Special Committee on Honours and Titles, which held several meetings and eventually submitted a report to Parliament calling for The King to cease conferring all honours and titular distinctions, save military ranks and vocational and professional titles, upon residents of Canada. It also recommended that action be taken to extinguish the heritable quality of peerages and baronetcies held by Canadians. The committee requested that His Majesty “refrain hereafter from conferring any title or titular distinction upon any of your subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada.”²⁴ The matter of honours for members of the military was also addressed:

*Your Committee, however, do not recommend the discontinuance of the practice of awarding military or naval decorations, such as the Victoria Cross, Military Cross, Military Medal, Conspicuous Service Cross [Distinguished Service Cross], and similar decorations to persons in military or naval services of Canada for exceptional valour and devotion to duty.*²⁵

The question of honours for meritorious service in the military was not specifically dealt with, although the policy that emerged saw a prohibition on all such honours for Canadians, both civil and military. The final part of the report affirmed the

committee's desire to see that no resident of Canada be permitted to accept a title of honour or titular distinction from a foreign (non-British) government. Parliament passed a motion of concurrence with the report and it was adopted.²⁶ The government of Sir Robert Borden was quite flexible when it came to allowing honours for meritorious service, allowing appointments to the titular and non-titular levels of the British orders of chivalry to continue in recognition of services rendered during the Great War, with the last such honours being conferred in 1920. This was followed by a long absence of such honours from Canadian life.

Interwar Period

The prohibition on Canadians accepting British honours commenced in 1918 and lasted until 1933. Neither Prime Ministers Arthur Meighen nor William Lyon Mackenzie King submitted honours lists, although it was well within their power to do so. Both leaders hesitated on account of the issue remaining contentious, and Mackenzie King, in particular, claimed little interest in such devices.²⁷ The prohibition was not complete, however, as Canadians living in other parts of the British Empire were still eligible to be awarded honours. Thus a member of the Canadian Militia serving on exchange with the British Army was able to receive an honour for meritorious service, while his counterparts back in Canada were not.

By 1920, there were no more appointments made to the Order of the Bath, Order of St. Michael and St. George or Order of the British Empire. Appointments to the Distinguished Service Order ceased on account of the war's end, it being bestowed only during armed conflicts. This meant that the small Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Militia and newly formed Canadian Air Force (shortly thereafter the Royal Canadian Air Force) had no way to recognize meritorious or distinguished service. No other country imposed such a ban on the receipt of honours as had been imposed following adoption of the Nickle Resolution of 1918 and the Report of the Special Committee on Honours and Titles of 1919. The subject of honours remained highly controversial, and it was not until after R. B. Bennett became Prime Minister in 1930 that the flow of honours to civilians and military personnel resumed—but then only for a few years.

Bennett chose to ignore the Report of the Special Committee and adhered closely to the original Nickle Resolution, which firmly placed control over recommendations for British honours to Canadians in the hands of the Prime Minister. The report was simply an advisory document and had no statutory authority other than to represent Parliament's opinion on the subject in 1919. Bennett's honours lists were highly



The Right Honourable Richard Bedford Bennett, 1st Viscount Bennett, PC, KC

egalitarian, void of patronage and broadly spread amongst the various regions; furthermore, for the first time in Canadian history, women were recognized with equal frequency as their male counterparts.

The military honours lists drawn up during Bennett's time in office contained only 15 honours for members of the RCN, Canadian Militia and RCAF; however, they were spread evenly between the three services, and split in a proportionate fashion between officers and NCMs.²⁸ Given that the size of the RCN, Canadian Militia (Permanent Force) and RCAF numbered at just over 10,000 officers and men,²⁹ the number of appointments was generous for peacetime. Nominations were submitted through each service's chain of command, approved by the Minister of National Defence, dispatched to Bennett,



The medals of Warrant Officer 1st Class Wenceslas Bilodeau, who was made an MBE between the Wars. Note that his 1st type MBE insignia (with Britannia in the centre) is mounted with the 2nd type ribbon as was authorized from 1937. The group also includes medals for the two World Wars, the Army Meritorious Service Medal and the rare Permanent Forces of the Empire Beyond the Seas Long Service Medal

and forwarded to The King through the Governor General. In terms of civil honours, Bennett's reinstatement of appointments to all of the British orders of chivalry that had historically been available to Canadians resulted in 18 knighthoods being conferred, along with 151 appointments to the civil division of the Order of the British Empire, 77 of which went to women working in a variety of fields, mainly volunteer-based or social services.

Another of Bennett's actions was to allow the RCMP Long Service Medal to be established in 1934. For more than a decade, the RCMP had been attempting to gain support for the creation of a long service medal for members of the Force, only to be met with bureaucratic and political delay. The RCMP Long Service Medal would become the very first honour created by the Sovereign on the advice of his Canadian Prime Minister, making it the very first Canadian honour. Previous honours awarded in Canada had all been created in the United Kingdom and simply applied to Canada. Bennett lost the 1935 General Election and Mackenzie King returned to office for a third time as Prime Minister. Mackenzie King's dislike of honours translated into an immediate end to all civil and military honours lists.



The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Long Service Medal, King George V issue



The Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King, PC, OM, CMG as a young Deputy Minister, wearing the civil uniform and his insignia as a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG)

Second World War

When Canada entered the Second World War on 10 September 1939, it was the only belligerent that did not permit the bestowal of honours for gallantry, bravery or meritorious service. On the other hand, members of the RCN, Canadian Militia and RCAF were eligible for no less than eight long service awards with the unusual exclusion of all Regular force officers.³⁰



A Halifax Bomber during a mission over Europe



The medals of Major Leo Gratton, MBE, which, in addition to the MBE, include the typical campaign medals awarded to Canadians during the Second World War such as the 1939-45 Star, the France and Germany Star, the Italy Star, the Defence Medal, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp and the War Medal 1939-45 as well as the rarer French *Croix de Guerre* with bronze star

Realizing that the lack of an honours policy or honours system was highly problematic in wartime, in early 1940 the Minister of National Defence, Norman Rogers, sanctioned a special interdepartmental committee, which would later become known as the Awards Coordination Committee (ACC). The Committee examined the issue of gallantry awards and honours policy in general. With the consent of The King and the Prime Minister, the Committee drafted a formal honours policy, which set out that Canadians could receive gallantry decorations in recognition of service against the enemy.³¹ This meant that, once again, Canadians would be awarded such honours as the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), Military Cross (MC), Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), Military Medal (MM) and other similar decorations. No provision had been made for the bestowal of honours for merit, namely the military divisions of the Order of the Bath or Order of the British Empire.

The inability of Canadians to receive honours for merit was first broached by none other than the Sovereign himself, King George VI. During his April 1940 visit to London, Rogers had an audience with The King who "Brought up the questions of honours, decorations and awards...It was quite evident however that the King was interested in the subject."³² George VI took a very personal interest in the orders, decorations and medals bestowed in his name and on his behalf. Well beyond the constitutional duty of the Sovereign to be involved in the honours system by presiding



The Honourable Norman McLeod Rogers, PC



His Majesty King George VI

over investitures and signing warrants, he always cared deeply about how exemplary service, gallantry and bravery were recognized.³³ The Minister took The King's concerns back to the Prime Minister, who was not overly engaged on the subject at this point in the war. The interdepartmental committee continued to examine the issue of honours and ultimately found that "it is impracticable to make provisions for recognition of conduct and action involving gallantry, courage, meritorious service and devotion to duty without contravening the principles embodied in the Report [the 1919 Report of the Special Committee on Honours and Titles]."³⁴ The issue was discussed by the Cabinet War Committee on 11 October 1941, and it was decided that a special House of Commons Committee should examine the matter of honours in Canada.

In 1942, the House of Commons constituted the Special Committee on Honours and Decorations, which began sitting in July of that year. The Committee was mandated to:

Inquire into and to report upon the expediency:

- (a) of maintaining the principles that form the basis of recommendations contained in the said report [of the 1919 Special Committee on Honours and Titles] and confining in effect the said recommendations or,
- (b) of cancelling, altering, modifying or adding to the said recommendations, in so far as they relate to honours decorations which do not involve titles, and if so, in what respect to extent.³⁵

From the beginning it was clear that the issue of knighthoods was not going to be considered, the matter being firmly closed at the direction of Mackenzie King. Although the Committee's terms of reference were far from laconic, they set to work and devised a partial solution to the honours vacuum after eight meetings.

- (1) That His Majesty's subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada be eligible for the awards of Honours and Decorations, including awards in the Orders of chivalry, which do not involve titles.
- (2) That His Majesty's Government in Canada consider a submission to His Majesty the King, of proposals for the establishment of an Order limited in number but not involving titles, for which His Majesty's subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada shall alone be eligible.³⁶

This proposed policy would allow Canadians to receive gallantry and bravery decorations, and be eligible for the non-titular levels of the British orders of chivalry, which for those serving in the RCN, Canadian Army (formerly Canadian Militia, Permanent Force) and RCAF meant the Order of the Bath and Order of the British Empire. Appointments to these Orders were to be limited to the levels not conferring knighthood, leaving the honours system with Companions of the Order of the Bath, Commanders, Officers and Members of the Order of the British Empire and the British Empire Medal.³⁷ The proposal that the government establish a Canadian honour would be examined numerous times over the following quarter-century, only coming to fruition with the creation of the Order of Canada in 1967.

In essence, the Committee was adhering to the Nickle Resolution, which allowed for the bestowal of honours only on the advice of the Canadian government—while at the same time discarding the proposals of the 1919 Special Committee on Honours and Titles, which sought to discontinue the award of all British orders of chivalry to Canadians.



The medals of General Jean Victor Allard, CC, CBE, GOQ, DSO, ED, CD. His DSO with two bars is one of only two such awards for the Canadian Army during the Second World War. The DSO and first bar were for the Italian campaign, while the second bar was earned in north-west Europe. He was made a CBE at the conclusion of the War and a CC in 1968



Insignia of Companion
of the Order of the Bath
(Military Division)



Insignia of Commander of the
Order of the British Empire
(Civil Division) 2nd type



Insignia of Officer of the
Order of the British Empire
(Military Division) 2nd type



Insignia of Member of the
Order of the British Empire
(Military Division) 2nd type



The British Empire Medal
(Military Division with
2nd type ribbon)



The medals of Colonel William Edward Morgan, OBE, MC, ED. After earning an MC and bar during the Great War, he earned his OBE for work in the area of training during the Second World War



The medals of Colonel Pierre-Édouard Chassé, MBE, CD. He earned his MBE as a Major having parachuted behind enemy lines a few days after D-Day to support the local French Resistance. His group of medals ends with a French *Croix de Guerre* with bronze palm signifying a mention at Army level

Order-in-Council 1940-1430, which had allowed Canadians to receive only honours for gallantry and bravery, was revoked and replaced with Order-in-Council 1941-8882 on 15 November 1941; civilians and members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF were now eligible for the non-titular levels of the British orders of chivalry. This would remain the guiding policy toward honours in Canada until the end of the Second World War and the 1946 Dominion Day honours list, which brought the



Design for the proposed Royal Order of Canada of 1943

bestowal of honours for service in the war to a conclusion. It is worth noting that while Canadians were being appointed to the British orders of chivalry and being awarded British decorations and medals, they were all bestowed by the Sovereign of Canada on the advice of his Canadian ministers, and thus they were Canadian in character, both in a legal sense and in their perception as being "Canadian honours." Following passage of the Statute of Westminster of 1931, all honours conferred upon Canadians for service in Canada or at the behest of the Canadian government were approved on the advice of the Canadian government, and appointments were made by the Sovereign in Right of Canada.

Throughout the war there were numerous attempts to create a Canadian honour to recognize merit and distinguished service. Proposals took the form of both multi-leveled orders and single-level medals. Colourful names such as the Order of the Beaver, the Royal Order of Canada, the King's Canadian Order, the Canadian Decoration of Honour and the Canadian Award of Honour were all considered, along with more simple designations, notably the Order of Canada and the Canada Medal. It was this last proposal, for the Canada Medal, that met with some success and provides an interesting window into the government's perception of the need for an indigenous Canadian honours system.

The Canada Medal was created by a Royal Warrant signed by King George VI on 27 August 1943. The medal was to be awarded to citizens and non-citizens for "specially valuable and meritorious service of a high standard [...] special service of a high degree of merit, such as discharge of special duties superior to the person's ordinary work [...] highly meritorious performance of ordinary duties where these have entailed work of a specially trying character."³⁸

The Canada Medal depicted King George VI on the obverse and the crowned shield of the Royal Arms of Canada, surrounded by maple leaves, on the reverse. The suspender of the medal carried the word "MERIT" or "MÉRITE." Recipients were to be entitled to the post-nominal initials CM or M du C. In all, fifteen Canada Medals were struck, eight in English and seven in French. The ribbon consisted of three stripes, equal in width, of red, white and red. While the medal was supposed to rank ahead of the British Empire Medal in the order of precedence, it was to become the



The Canada Medal

main Canadian honour, recognizing all levels of meritorious service, military and civil, regardless of whether the contribution was local, national or international in scope. The quota of annual awards was set at one-tenth of one percent of the total strength of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF with not more than 50 percent of awards going to officers.³⁹

The first honours list containing awards of the Canada Medal was to be issued on 11 November 1943. Such persons as The King, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin and a host of Canadian service personnel were to be included. However, while approval for the medal was given, the medals struck and lists drawn up, no awards were ever made. Repeated requests from the ACC and various government departments were met with a refusal to see the medal awarded.⁴⁰ Prime Minister Mackenzie King's dislike of honours translated into a refusal to bestow the new medal.

The honours bestowed in recognition of military merit during the Second World War were the first to attempt to recognize non-commissioned officers as well as officers. This was largely on account of the Order of the British Empire, its five-leveled structure and the British Empire Medal. For the first time in Canadian military history the Crown, and commanders, had at their disposal a mechanism for recognizing merit at all levels of rank and for every type of significant meritorious service, from a single meritorious act of great importance to prolonged effort and meritorious service.



The medals of Sergeant Muriel Joyce Bryant, née Turpin, CM, BEM. One of the rare female recipients of the BEM during the Second World War, she earned it as a clerk supporting the Directorate of Medical Services at the RCAF Overseas Headquarters in London

Hitherto, all recognition for merit was awarded to those holding commissions, the NCMs being eligible for only the Meritorious Service Medal during the First World War, while officers had no less than four different orders of chivalry to which they could be appointed.

The inability of Canadians to accept appointment to the top levels of the British orders of chivalry posed a unique problem when it came to recognizing senior General Officers. Unable to accept a GCB/KCB or GBE/KBE like their British, Australian and New Zealander counterparts, a number of Canadian Generals had hit the proverbial glass ceiling when it came to receiving honours. The first General to be faced with an honours handicap was General Harry Crerar, CB, DSO, General Officer Commanding the First Canadian Division. Crerar had been made a CB in 1943 and was nominated to become a KBE by Field Marshal Montgomery in 1945.⁴¹ The closest alternative was a CBE, but this was not sufficient recognition when one considers that it was usually awarded to Brigadiers and Major-Generals, not full Generals commanding a Division—not to mention the fact that a CBE was junior to the CB, which he already held. General A. G. L. McNaughton, CB, CMG, DSO, like Crerar, had received all of the honours available to him under the Canadian rules. He had been appointed a CB in Bennett's honours list while serving as Chief of the General Staff, and already had a CMG and DSO from the First World War, so there were no additional non-titular honours open to the General.

The solution to appropriately recognizing these two Generals was found in the Order of the Companions of Honour (CH). The single-leveled Order was founded by King George V in 1917 to



General the Honourable Henry
Duncan Graham Crerar, PC, CH,
CB, DSO, CD



General the Honourable Andrew
George Latta McNaughton, PC,
CH, CB, CMG, DSO, CD



Insignia of the Order of the
Companions of Honour



The Right Honourable John
George Diefenbaker, PC, CH,
QC, wearing his newly presented
CH insignia

serve, in part, as a senior non-titular alternative to the various British orders of chivalry. Originally limited to 50 members, in 1943 the membership limit of the Order was expanded. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were asked if they would accept a fixed number of appointments for residents of their respective Dominions. While Australia and New Zealand were quite keen, Canada and South Africa respectfully declined the offer, despite the fact that Canada had been offered seven appointments.⁴² At the time Canadian officials were considering the establishment of a Canadian honour known as the Canadian Decoration of Honour and the Canadian Award of Honour. As a result of the Canadian and South African abstentions, the CH's statutes were consequently amended setting revised quotas: United Kingdom 45, Australia 7, New Zealand 2 and Commonwealth nations 11, for a total membership of 65. By the time Crerar's case came up, Canada had already refused the offer of appointments to the CH; nevertheless, the Minister of National Defence submitted the nomination and it was approved by The King in 1945. McNaughton's case was pressed by Mackenzie King and he was appointed in 1946.⁴³ The CH has not often been used to recognize military service. Former Chief of the Defence Staff General John de Chastelain was appointed a CH in 1999, but this was in recognition for his efforts in the Northern Ireland peace process. A total of nine Canadians have been appointed as CHs since 1917, including two former Prime Ministers, John Diefenbaker and Pierre Trudeau, and one former Governor General, Vincent Massey.

Korean War and Beyond

As with the Second World War, Canada entered the Korean War with no honours system to speak of, civil or military.⁴⁴ The government elected to institute a policy similar to that used during the Second World War, with Cabinet Directive 25 on 29 June 1951. Gallantry and bravery awards were to be permitted to members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF serving in the presence of the enemy, and appointments to the non-titular levels of the British orders of chivalry were also permitted, but only to military personnel. Thus there was no civilian recognition accorded to non-military personnel who supported the war effort, unlike during the previous war where nearly 2,000 civilians were recognized for their efforts on the home front.



The Korea
Medal

The United Nations
Service Medal – Korea

His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Nootka* firing its
guns at enemy targets off the coast of Korea,
28 May 1951

Following the end of the Korean War, Cabinet adopted yet another new policy towards honours, which essentially reverted to the policy used throughout the Korean War, but with more flexibility and allowances for bravery awards to be conferred upon civilians. The directive also set out the circumstances under which Canadians could receive honours from foreign countries:

Decorations from The Queen

1. Civilians

- (a) services rendered in support of any war effort or military operations in which Canada may be engaged or participate; and
- (b) acts of bravery performed at the risk of death or serious injury not only in saving or attempting to save human lives from imminent danger, but in arresting, attempting to arrest or assisting in the arrest of dangerous criminals or in other exceptional circumstances which may be deemed to justify such recognition.

2. Armed Forces

- (a) services rendered in connection with any war or military operation conducted or participated in by Canada (decorations which may be awarded under this clause include campaign medals);
- (b) acts of bravery, not coming within clause (a) of this sub-paragraph, such as described in sub-paragraph (1)(b) of paragraph 1;



The medals of Colonel Joseph Alexandre Vallée, OBE, CD. After service in the Italian campaign during the Second World War, he earned his OBE during the Korean War

- (c) long service and good conduct as members of the armed forces; and
- (d) marksmanship.⁴⁵

Cabinet Directive 30 went a long way toward giving senior officers in the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF hope that the flow of honours could resume under certain circumstances. Canada's involvement in a number of United Nations and international operations overseas necessitated this change. Under this policy, members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF were awarded 21 George Medals (GM) between 1956 and 1968, and 22 appointments to the Order of the British Empire (military division) and awards of the British Empire Medal (military division) for gallantry were made. Civilian bravery did not go unrecognized, with 10 GMs being awarded during the same period.⁴⁶ The George Medal was the second highest award for bravery (non-combat), ranked just below the George Cross. Members of the RCAF received 22 Air Force Crosses (AFC). The AFC was awarded for "acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying though not in active operations against the enemy."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, unlike Canada's NATO and Commonwealth allies, members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF were ineligible for recognition of meritorious service unless they served in an operational area. While other countries had routine honours lists and meritorious service in the domestic sphere was regularly recognized, the Canadian military had nothing other than the Canadian Forces' Decoration.



The George Medal



The Air Force Cross



The Canadian Forces'
Decoration (George VI issue)

Following the Korean War, the military's Personnel Members Committee (PMC) and Inter Service Awards Committee (ISAC) intermittently discussed three issues: awarding the Canada Medal, creating a Canadian Order and "participating on a limited scale in Her Majesty's Honours List."⁴⁸ This last suggestion would have resulted in routine appointments to the military division of the British orders of chivalry upon the advice of the Minister of National Defence. This suggestion was rejected by the Defence Council despite strong recommendations from the PMC and ISAC. The lack of interest amongst civilians, especially the government of the day, for resuming a regular honours list was the most significant factor in the failure of the proposal to move forward. As we will see in the next chapter, the suggestion that a Canadian order be established was not abandoned and periodic efforts were made to encourage the creation of a national honour within the senior-most levels of government.

The issue of honours for meritorious service was not considered closely again until it was raised by the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) in 1959 and 1960. The CDA was calling for the flow of honours for meritorious service to resume for members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF for services rendered at home and in overseas operations. The CDA was of the "opinion that service to Crown and country is deserving of recognition and encouragement."⁴⁹ The question of honours for meritorious service piqued the interest of some officers as the ISAC began examining the issue of peacetime awards for outstanding service. The Army had requested that consideration be given to the granting of awards in recognition of outstanding service in the Congo.⁵⁰ This matter was then examined by the PMC in June 1961, which considered a proposal from the ISAC that called for no action to "be taken to recognize outstanding service in peacetime and continue to recognize bravery only [...] have the Minister designate the Congo as an area of military operations within the intent of Cabinet Directive No. 30," and proceed with consideration of recommendations for honours in relation to service in the Congo. The ISAC went further and encouraged the Government Decorations Committee (the successor of the ACC) to consider "the whole subject of honours."⁵¹ One week later, the PMC designated the Congo an area of military operations within the intent of Cabinet Directive 30.⁵²

The question of honours for military service had become of interest due to Canada's high-profile involvement in the UN Mission in the Congo (ONUC). In the summer of 1960, the Belgian Congo had gained independence from Belgium and a withdrawal of Belgian officials and troops began. Violence broke out during the withdrawal and Belgium unilaterally sent its forces back in to protect Belgian citizens. The UN Security Council called upon the Belgian forces to withdraw from the country and agreed to offer military assistance to stabilize the country.⁵³ The initial task of ONUC



Canadians serving
with ONUC



The United Nations
Organization in
Congo (ONUC)
Medal

was to maintain the territorial integrity of the Congo and to maintain the political independence of Africa's newest country. At peak strength, the ONUC forces included 20,000 officers and men, with 27 countries participating in the mission.⁵⁴ In 1961, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, the mineral-rich Katanga province attempted to secede from the Congo. In addition to dealing with state actors, there were also regular incursions by foreign mercenaries. By February 1963, Katanga had been reintegrated into the Congo and the operation began to conclude, with ONUC forces completely withdrawn by 30 June 1964. In all nearly 2,000 Canadians served in theatre, primarily members of the Canadian Army with a few RCAF service personnel as well. Two Canadians died while on active service with ONUC.

The PMC examined the possibility of appointments to the Order of the British Empire for services in ONUC in February 1962,⁵⁵ after receiving a nomination for an OBE to be conferred upon a Lieutenant-Colonel of the *Royal 22^e Régiment*. A seldom-used provision allowed the Order of the British Empire to be awarded not only for meritorious service, but also for gallantry. At this time the gradation of honours bestowed for gallantry were:

- The George Cross, *for gallantry of the highest order*
- The George Medal, *for gallantry of an extremely high order*

- The CBE, OBE, MBE and BEM
(with gallantry oak leaf emblem)
*for gallantry of a high order*⁵⁶

The Order of the British Empire was used, albeit rarely, to recognize acts of gallantry from its foundation in 1917 until 1974.⁵⁷ Through this period, a total of 147 appointments were made to the Order of the British Empire for gallantry and 825 British Empire Medals were awarded for gallantry throughout the Commonwealth.⁵⁸ It was this infrequently used provision for appointments to be made to the Order for gallant acts that resulted in employment of the Order of the British Empire and British Empire Medal to recognize gallantry of both members of the military and civilians up until 1968.



The Gallantry Emblem of the Order of the British Empire



The medals of Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Paul Roger Edmond Beauregard, OMM, MBE, CD. One of the few MBEs for gallantry related to the Congo mission, he had previously served in Korea and was made an OMM in 1982

An early recommendation for a Canadian to be recognized under this more liberalized policy was Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-André Berthiaume of the *Royal 22^e Régiment*, who was recognized for bravery and “initiative, linguistic ability and special aptitude for negotiating.”⁵⁹ This was followed by a nomination for Lieutenant Joseph Terrence Francis Anthony Liston, also of the *Royal 22^e Régiment*. Berthiaume was appointed an OBE, with oak leaves for gallantry, on 16 June 1962. Liston was appointed an MBE with oak leaves for gallantry on 4 January 1964.⁶⁰ Along with Liston’s MBE came an Air Force Cross to Pilot Officer D. F. Parker of the RCAF. This would be the last AFC awarded to a member of the RCAF.



Colonel Jean-André Berthiaume, OBE, CD

The last appointment made at the level of Commander of the Order of the British Empire, made by The Queen in Right of Canada on the advice of her Canadian Ministers, came in 1964. Then-Brigadier Jacques Dextraze, DSO, OBE, CD, was elevated in the Order to a CBE with oak leaf emblem for gallantry. This remains the only CBE appointment ever made for gallantry.⁶¹ The appointment was published in the *Canada Gazette* “For Services with the UN Forces in the Congo.”⁶² The vexatious issue of honours being largely ignored by Canadian officials, the nomination for Dextraze to be recognized for his gallantry came from Lyndon Johnson, President of the United States. So impressed was Johnson with Dextraze’s initiative and mettle that he wrote to the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, who forwarded the nomination to Canadian authorities.⁶³ The Government Decorations Committee met in June 1964, to examine the case and the elevation of Dextraze as a CBE for gallantry was subsequently made.⁶⁴ In addition to a component of meritorious service, all three Canadian appointments made to the Order of the British Empire for services in ONUC included a significant element of gallantry.

The last George Medals awarded to Canadians were bestowed upon Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Mayer, MBE, CD, and Sergeant Joseph Lessard, on 28 June 1964. While serving in the Congo, Mayer rescued ten nuns and four priests from members

of the *Jeunesse*, the rebel Congolese group. At one point “a frenzied *Jeunesse* thrust a pistol in his stomach and pulled the trigger. Fortunately, there was no round in the chamber [...] During the whole operation, this Officer’s life was in constant danger.”⁶⁵ The hostages were evacuated to an awaiting UN helicopter. Lessard assisted in the rescue of nuns from churches that the rebel forces had seized. “He fought like a man possessed [...] he bent down, grabbed the arm of the prostrate nun and literally threw her into the cabin. The helicopter was already airborne when he drove off his last assailant and jumped aboard amid a hail of spears and arrows.”⁶⁶

It was to Captain (Nursing Sister) Josephine A. Cashin of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) that the last military division MBE to a member of the Canadian Forces was awarded. Cashin played a central role in ministering to air accident victims in Gander, Newfoundland, following the crash of a Czechoslovakian



Colonel Paul Augustus Mayer, MBE, GM, CD. Having been made an MBE for his service in the Korean War, he was one of the last two Canadians awarded the George Medal for a daring rescue in the Congo



Colonel Mayer receives his George Medal from the Governor General, General the Right Honourable Georges Philias Vanier, PC, DSO, MC, CD, at Rideau Hall

State Airlines passenger jet. Cashin walked more than half a mile across a muskeg bog in total darkness to the disaster scene:

*"struggling through the littered and burning area with complete disregard for her own safety, Nursing Sister Cashin repeatedly answered screams for help from the injured. During some five hours at the crash scene, lightly clad and wearing only summer sandals, she was constantly in and around the burning wreckage searching for and giving aid to the many injured... Only when the last survivor had been found did she leave the crash scene, not to ease her own discomfort, but for the James Paton Memorial Hospital where she continued to contribute her professional skill to the further care of the injured. The bravery and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Nursing Sister Cashin was apparent at all times, and no doubt was responsible for the saving of many lives."*⁶⁷

It was a fitting end to the use of British honours in Canada, gallant actions in protecting the most vulnerable. The bestowal of honours for gallantry was obviously viewed as the only type of recognition—beyond long service and UN service medals—that could be accorded to members of the RCN, Canadian Army and RCAF. The only awards for meritorious service approved were those that included a specific gallant act. Realizing that the return of a full-scale use of British honours in Canada for military services was highly unlikely, the Department of National Defence created a number of highly detailed proposals for the establishment of a Canadian order to recognize meritorious service in the early 1960s. As we will see in the following chapter, it was these efforts that played an important role in the eventual establishment of the Order of Canada in 1967, and the broader Canadian honours system in 1972.



Chapter Two

A National Honours System Becomes Reality

Some difficulties might arise in relating the awards to civilians and awards to the military. There might be wisdom in a separate military order of a distinctive Canadian character.

Decision of Cabinet, 29 November 1966

The events and decisions that led to the establishment of the Order of Military Merit by Her Majesty The Queen in 1972 were deeply woven into the story of how the Order of Canada came to be the foundation upon which our national honours system has been constructed. The very close relationship between the two Orders is apt and well demonstrates the significance of the Order of Military Merit as the Crown's premier mechanism to recognize meritorious service in the military sphere. Indeed, it is doubtful that the Order of Canada would have been developed when it was, were it not for the persistence of the Department of National Defence and Vincent Massey, who served as Governor General from 1952 to 1959. Both the Department and Massey routinely pressed the case for a national order, namely the Order of Canada. In the early stages, the Order of Canada was to recognize both civil and military service, but the Order of Canada ultimately proved insufficient for according recognition upon members of the Canadian Forces.

At the end of the Second World War, the Personnel Members Committee (PMC) of the Department of National Defence developed a detailed proposal for a five-leveled Order of Canada, with military and civil divisions, to be used as Canada's premier honour for meritorious service. With no awards of the Canada Medal, and an extensive Dominion Day honours list for 1946 to mark the end of the war, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had little appetite for revisiting the need for a Canadian order. In the post-war period, the question of a Canadian order was again pressed upon Mackenzie King, this time by the Governor General, Field Marshal Lord Alexander of Tunis. Alexander was about to embark upon an official visit to Brazil: "Personally, I am very much in favour of the institution of an Order of Canada, in possibly five degrees."⁶⁸ Alexander proposed the designation "Order of Canada" and was hopeful that the Order could be established in time for him to present it to President Dutra in recognition of his contribution in founding the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, who fought alongside Canadian and Commonwealth troops in Italy during the Second World



Field Marshal the Right Honourable the Earl Alexander of Tunis, KG, PC, GCB, OM, GCMG, CSI, DSO, MC, CD, ADC

War. Mackenzie King was unimpressed with the proposal and also refused to allow Alexander to award Dutra the Canada Medal. Mackenzie King noted in his diary: "I told the Cabinet I had never experienced more pain and anguish over any public matter than I have on anything that had to do with decorations and honours [...] I did not wish to have the name of my Ministry of which I had been a member identified with the establishment of an Order or Decoration in Canada."⁶⁹

Following the failure of Lord Alexander's 1948 proposal for a Canadian order, there continued to be interest within the Department of National Defence in the creation of some sort of Canadian order to recognize meritorious service, largely based upon the Order of the British Empire and the *Légion d'honneur*. The desire for either a complete reactivation of the British honours system in Canada or the creation of something entirely new was discussed on at least an annual basis at meetings of the PMC and the Inter Service Awards Committee (ISAC). In part, hope persisted because of the mystical Canada Medal. The medal existed on paper and in reality—examples had been struck and were at one point on display. While the Canada Medal was a wholly inadequate mechanism to recognize all meritorious acts, both civil and military, it still served as a beacon of hope, even if it remained a cruel mirage for those seeking a single Canadian honour, if not a full-fledged honours system.

In May 1952, the Defence Council requested the PMC to prepare a paper for the Minister of National Defence on the institution of an Order of Canada. A proposal, based upon the 1948 Alexander Order of Canada, was prepared and revised by the PMC and submitted to the Defence Council, where it was further refined. The Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, took the proposal to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, who promptly quashed the proposal.⁷⁰ St. Laurent must have been somewhat perturbed with the regularity with which questions of honours crossed his desk—with the Korean War, submissions from Claxton proposing the creation of the Canadian Forces' Decoration and a recent proposal for a Canadian



The Honourable Brooke Claxton, PC, DCM, KC



The Right Honourable Louis Stephen St. Laurent, PC, CC, QC

order advanced by Vincent Massey. No doubt some of Mackenzie King's deep dislike of honours had been inculcated into his former Lieutenant.

The Royal Commission on the National Development of the Arts, Letters and Sciences, commonly known as the "Massey Commission," named in honour of its chairman, the future Governor General, had included in its final report a proposal for a Canadian honours system. The proposed order was given the designation "Order of St. Lawrence," a proposal that had initially been advanced by Canada's first post-Confederation Governor General, Viscount Monck, in 1866.⁷¹



The Right Honourable
Vincent Massey, PC, CH,
CC, CD

Grand Cross of the Order of St. Lawrence	GCSL
Grand Officer of the Order of St. Lawrence	GOSL
Commander of the Order of St. Lawrence	CSL
Officer of the Order of St. Lawrence	OSL
Member of the Order of St. Lawrence	MSL
Medal of the Order of St. Lawrence	SLM/MduSL

The structure of the proposed order was based on that of the Order of the British Empire, with the exception that the top two levels did not confer the accolade of knighthood and bore names inspired by the *Légion d'honneur*. It was the proposed method of selecting members of the order that was most unique. Appointments were to be made by The King on the advice of

a non-political committee, to be known as The Honours Committee [...] that the chairman and members of the committee be appointed by the Governor-in-Council: that its membership consist of eleven persons, including the chairman, among whom would be ex-officio the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Secretary to the Governor General, the Under-Secretary of State and the Deputy Minister of National Defence: that appointment to the remaining five places be made in each instance for a specified term of years.⁷²

The role of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was removed from selecting or approving the names of those to be appointed to the Order. This non-partisan approach to honours was unique at the time and would serve as the basis for the Advisory Council of the Order of Canada when that Order was established in 1967. Cabinet examined the proposal in August 1951. So sensitive about questions related to honours, St. Laurent wrote to the leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, George

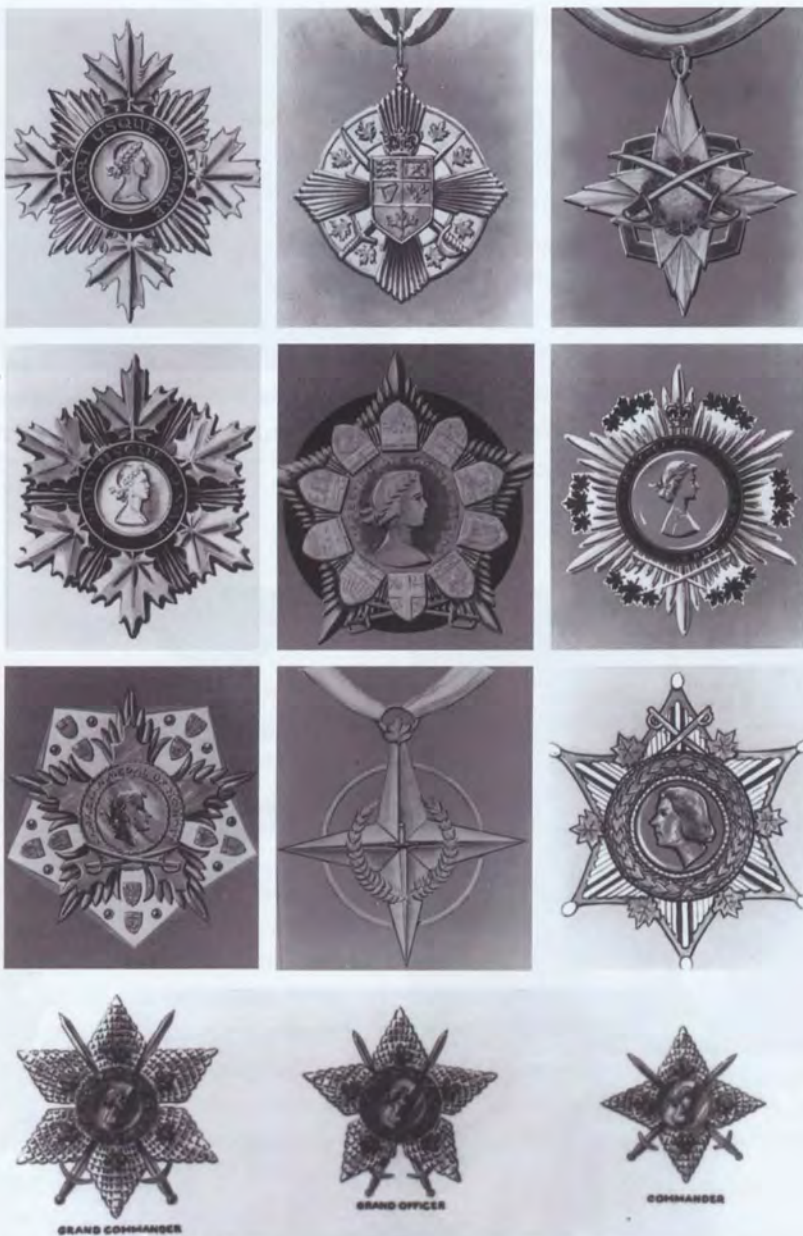
Drew of the Progressive Conservative Party, and to M. J. Coldwell of the CCF, noting that the matter of honours “will have to be dealt with in some fashion sooner or later.”⁷³ Cabinet was not enthralled with the proposal. It did not help that the name of the proposed honour, “St. Lawrence,” was very similar to the Prime Minister’s, “St. Laurent.” With an election approaching, Cabinet did not approve the proposal and all reference to it was excised from the final report of the Massey Commission.

Claxton had been critical to the development of the Canadian Forces’ Decoration in 1951, a project that took nearly five years to reach its conclusion. The CD project had taught the Minister that nothing was ever straightforward when it came to honours, and the more complex the proposal, the less likely it was to succeed. Despite the refusal of Cabinet to approve the creation of Massey’s Order of St. Lawrence, Claxton did not discourage the development of other similar proposals by his department. It had taken several attempts to succeed in creating the Canadian Forces’ Decoration and it was not in the nature of the venerable Minister and decorated veteran of the Great War to abandon projects he felt were worthy.⁷⁴ Throughout the 1950s, the Department continued to rehash Lord Alexander’s proposal for an Order of Canada to recognize civil and military achievement. As with the establishment of the Canadian Forces’ Decoration and even the RCMP Long Service Medal, it was encouragement from outside of the federal government that helped to reignite interest in the creation of an honour to recognize outstanding military service.

At the 1959 and 1960 annual meetings of the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA), resolutions were put forward calling for the establishment of a system of honours.

*Whereas the Conference of Defence Associations is still of the opinion that service to the Crown and country is deserving of recognition and encouragement [...] And whereas citizens of other Commonwealth countries are eligible for the receipt of honours and awards in recognition of such services and it is considered a matter of embarrassment to Canadians that similarly appropriate recognition is not available to them and apart from other consideration seems desirable that this situation be rectified to put Canadians on the same basis as other Commonwealth citizens.*⁷⁵

While not the most laconic resolution, the resolution was noticed by the Department of National Defence. In October 1959, the Defence Council directed the PMC to review the 1948 Alexander proposal for an Order of Canada, and this was discussed at the meeting of the Council on 23 February 1960. The proposal called for a five-leveled Order of Canada, composed of a civil and a military division, included



Designs related to various proposals for an Order of Canada or Order of Military Merit (those with swords). Most of these date from the 1950s and early 1960s and take inspiration from Soviet awards of the period

extensive regulations governing the bestowal of the Order, insignia design and appointment mechanism.⁷⁶

From time to time, citizens of Canada, whether as civilians or as members of the Navy, Military and Air Forces, render valuable and meritorious service above and beyond their normal duties, which service is worthy of special recognition.⁷⁷

The Chiefs of Staff Committee was supportive of the proposal, as was the Associate Minister of National Defence, Pierre Sévigny, who immediately requested that the Under-Secretary of State, Charles Stein, call a meeting of the Government Decorations Committee to consider the proposal. Sévigny was a veteran of the Second World War, having lost a leg in the Battle of the Rhine for which he received Poland's highest military decoration, the *Virtuti Militari*, along with both the French *Croix de Guerre* and the Belgian *Croix de Guerre*.



Pierre Sévigny



The Polish *Virtuti Militari*



The French *Croix de Guerre*



The Belgian *Croix de Guerre*
(here with its
First World War
ribbon)



The West Block of Parliament with its Mackenzie Tower

On 11 March 1960, the West Block of Parliament was the site of the meeting of the Government Decorations Committee, the successor body to the Awards Coordination Committee.⁷⁸ The Committee came to some pretty profound conclusions at their meeting and recommended that the existing government policy towards honours be changed “so as to permit the awarding of decorations or honours for other than war service and gallantry (war and non-war)”⁷⁹; it went on to propose the creation of a Canadian order of chivalry to recognize the aforementioned service:

*The new Order should be awarded only in recognition of exceptionally valuable and meritorious service to Canada above and beyond the normal duties which service is worthy of special recognition.*⁸⁰

The Committee was endorsing the DND proposal and recommended a significant departure from the pre-existing Canadian policy towards honours as outlined in Cabinet Directive 30 of 1956. At long last, it seemed as though the creation of an Order of Canada was moving forward, but it was not to be. Ten days after the highly successful meeting, a letter classified as SECRET was sent to all members of the Committee:

*The Chairman of the Decorations Committee desires me to inform you that he has been asked by the Associate Minister of National Defence to ensure that the subject of the meeting of the Committee held on Friday March 11, 1960 will continue to be regarded as secret and confidential. The Chairman has assured the Minister that every precaution in this regard has been taken and will continue to be taken, and he has asked me to remind you of the importance of continuing to observe careful precautions of secrecy in the matter referred to.*⁸¹

The classification of the meeting as secret was highly unusual since the designation “honours in confidence” had historically been used for all honours-related discussions. Cabinet did not discuss the matter, and the only person in a position to become directly involved in questions related to honours policy was the Prime



The Right Honourable John
George Diefenbaker, PC,
CH, QC

Minister. John Diefenbaker was not faced with many questions related to honours during his time as head of government. There were discussions about increasing the annual annuity given to recipients of the Victoria Cross to \$300, and Cabinet approved the bestowal of a George Medal, but the main honours issue Diefenbaker encountered was the impending appointment of Vincent Massey as a Knight of the Garter (KG). The Governor General was due to retire and The Queen had indicated she wished to make Massey a KG, the first from outside the United Kingdom. Diefenbaker was enthusiastic at first but ultimately blocked the appointment, so Massey was presented with the Royal Victorian Chain in place of the Garter.⁸²



The Right Honourable Lester
Bowles Pearson, PC, OM,
CC, OBE

There were no further discussions of creating a Canadian order in Cabinet, and the Department of National Defence similarly curbed its penchant for devising highly detailed, ready-to-implement proposals for national honours. One fact that had been proven repeatedly in the period following the virtual prohibition placed on the bestowal of honours after the end of the First World War was that even when no honours system was being utilized, citizen continued to perform remarkable feats of service and self-sacrifice. Diefenbaker would be replaced by Lester B. Pearson in April 1963. One of the new Prime Minister's electoral promises was to replace the Canadian Red Ensign with a new, distinctive national flag. This became part of a wider series of changes that resulted in the adoption of the Maple Leaf Flag as the national flag of Canada, the establishment of the Order of Canada and the unification of the Canadian Forces.



The Maple Leaf Flag adopted
in 1965

The Zambia Petrol Airlift

Events in Africa again prompted the issue of honours to be introduced to the Cabinet table, this time almost simultaneously with the preparations being made in considering the establishment of the Order of Canada.

In November 1965, the colonial government of Southern Rhodesia—what is today Zimbabwe—unilaterally declared independence from the United Kingdom. The colony had been on a rather rocky path toward independence, which had been prevented by the refusal of Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian D. Smith to allow for full participation of all citizens in the political institutions of the colony. Black citizens were not accorded the same rights as their white counterparts, and immense pressure from the international community was placed on both the British government—which had legal responsibility for the colony—and the white-dominated government of Rhodesia. The unilateral declaration of independence resulted in United Nations sanctions being levied against the colony and, in retaliation for this, Smith's government cut off all oil supplies to neighbouring Zambia. Zambia was totally dependent on oil supplies that were refined in Rhodesia, and upon supplies shipped by rail via Rhodesia from Mozambique.⁸³ During the crisis, the RCAF and RAF flew in oil supplies from Tanzania and the Congo to avert a humanitarian disaster and to ensure stability in the very recently independent Republic of Zambia.⁸⁴

Having met with success in recognizing five members of the Canadian Army for their gallant and meritorious service in the Congo while participating in ONUC only two years previously, and given other civilian and military appointments to the Order of the British Empire for gallant acts in the period following the Korean War, the ISAC and PMC were both supportive of honouring those involved in the Zambia Petrol Airlift. Minister of National Defence Paul Hellyer presented a proposal to Cabinet in April 1966, seeking authorization for the appointment of three RCAF officers as Members of the Order of the British Empire, along with British Empire Medals for two airmen. Unlike the honours bestowed for ONUC, these nominations were made "in recognition of their meritorious service which has been carried out under most difficult circumstances."⁸⁵ No element of gallantry was included in



The Honourable Paul Theodore Hellyer, PC

the nominations. Cabinet did not make a decision until its meeting on 5 May 1966, where Hellyer again pressed for some form of official recognition to be conferred upon the five RCAF personnel who had been nominated. Some members of Cabinet were uncomfortable with sanctioning the award of the Order of the British Empire for meritorious service alone, as opposed to for gallantry, while others wondered aloud how much longer it would be until Canada established its own system of honours. Certainly some around the table were well aware of the Prime Minister's project to establish the Order of Canada, but at this point, it was not something that had been discussed in Council.

Frustrated with the lack of progress on receiving approval for the honours, Hellyer expressed his view "that some form of recognition in peacetime was required for Canadian Service personnel."⁸⁶ He went on to say that he was "willing to consider other alternatives"⁸⁷ and proposed that a special committee be established to look into different options for what sort of honours could be used or created. On the recommendation of the Minister of National Defence, and with a bit of coaching from the Clerk of the Privy Council, Gordon Robertson—who was deeply involved in the plans to create the Order of Canada—Cabinet:

- (a) agreed in principle that it was desirable to establish some peacetime basis for granting awards for meritorious service to Armed Forces personnel; and
- (b) agreed that a special committee consisting of the Secretary of State, the Associate Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs be established to consider the proposal of the Minister of National Defence and to make recommendations as to what might appropriately be done about peacetime awards.⁸⁸

The discussion about the Order of the British Empire must have been unusual, if only for the fact that of the nineteen people sitting around the cabinet table, four were members of the Order.⁸⁹ More than half of the Ministers present that day went on to be appointed to the Order of Canada.

In the period leading up to the creation of the Order of Military Merit and the appointment of the first members, from 1966 to 1972, the Department of National Defence had eight different Ministers and Acting Ministers; few of them served for more than 18 months in the portfolio. It was a time of great change within the Canadian Forces, and more than just uniforms, ranks and designations were undergoing transformations. Prior to the departure of Paul Hellyer as Minister in 1968, after more than five years in office, a number of honours-related developments associated with the Order of Military Merit came to pass, notably

the creation of the Centennial Medal and the Order of Canada. Realizing that they were not going to have any progress with a full national order of merit, a commemorative medal and an operation-specific service medal seemed a more realistic goal. The PMC and ISAC continued to work on the creation of the Centennial Medal and a General Service Medal.⁹⁰ Throughout the Commonwealth there was a long history of bestowing commemorative medals on the occasion of Coronations and Jubilees. King George VI sanctioned the creation of independence medals for both India and Pakistan in 1947 to mark the establishment of both of those countries as Dominions. The initial proposal called for a medal to be awarded to members of the military as well as civilians in recognition of “outstanding contribution to our country.”⁹¹

The concept behind the Centennial Medal had been initiated by the Department of National Defence in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of State. In May 1965, Hellyer and the Secretary of State, Maurice Lamontagne, made a presentation to Cabinet recommending the creation of the Centennial Medal as part of the nationwide celebrations that were being planned for 1967. They noted that it would be “a most appropriate occasion for the Government of Canada to recognize the



The Pakistan
Independence Medal



The 1967
Centennial Medal



The Honourable Maurice
Lamontagne, PC

specially valuable service of many Canadian citizens [...] Therefore Her Majesty be graciously pleased to approve the institution of a Canadian medal to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.”⁹² Although the project had been initiated under the Diefenbaker government, much like the Centennial Commission, it was carried forward under Pearson. The medal was approved by The Queen on 27 June 1966, four months before a detailed proposal for the establishment of the Order of Canada was completed and presented to Cabinet.

Cabinet was formally asked to review the question of establishing the Order of Canada on 7 November 1966. The original proposal called for a three-leveled order.

Table 2.1
Structure of the Order of Canada as proposed, 7 November 1966

Level	Annual Appointments	Maximum Membership	Post-nominals
Companion	5	30	CC
Officer	25	100	OC
Members	50	∞	CM

From its inception the operation of the Order was to be non-partisan and focused on grass-roots nominations. The new Order was intended to primarily recognize civilian achievements, and this did not sit well with all members of Cabinet who also wanted to include military recognition. There was clearly a desire to keep the recognition of civil and military contributions separate.

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting reveal a certain fear amongst members that if the Order of Canada was also conferred in recognition of military contributions, the new Order would not be widely accepted: “Some difficulties might arise in relating the awards to civilians and awards to the military. There might be wisdom in a separate military order of a distinctive Canadian character.”⁹³ Other members of Cabinet were outright opposed to honours in general, notably Judy LaMarsh, Paul Martin Sr. and Mitchell Sharp. Hellyer was incensed that the military was being completely left out of the proposal to establish a national Order.⁹⁴ As a result of the lengthy discussion, no decision was taken on the Order of Canada and it was agreed to revisit the matter on 29 November 1966.



The Honourable Léo Joseph
Alphonse Cadieux, PC, OC

When Cabinet returned to the question of establishing the Order of Canada, further debate ensued and it was decided to drop the proposal for a three-leveled national order, with many believing that the presence of different levels was too European and elitist. A compromise was developed that saw the new Order reduced to one level, Companion. This single-leveled Order was to recognize all types of meritorious service with exactly the same honour. The Canadian honours system was thus intended to consist of a single honour for meritorious services—not unlike the original plan for the Canada Medal in 1943, as the honour to recognize everyone from Privates to Heads of State. The senior-most civil servant involved in the establishment of the Order of Canada later remarked it was “a clear cut case of elected representatives allowing political

interests to dictate compromise in a technical sphere in which few if any of them were knowledgeable.”⁹⁵ Hellyer was absent from the meeting on 29 November 1966, and was represented by the Associate Minister of National Defence, Léo Cadieux, who tried in vain to argue for the new Order to recognize both civil and military achievements and to be divided into three levels.

By January 1967, less than two months after Cabinet agreed that the Order of Canada was to consist of a single level, changes were made to the Constitution of the Order to add two additional awards; neither, however, returned the Order of Canada to the three-leveled structure. The Order was now to consist of one level and include two medals. Companions of the Order of Canada were to be appointed “for merit, especially service to Canada or to humanity at large.”⁹⁶ The Medal of Courage of the Order of Canada was to be awarded to any person “who performs an act of conspicuous courage in circumstances of great danger.”⁹⁷ Lastly, the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada was to be awarded in recognition of “merit, especially service to Canada or humanity at large.”⁹⁸



The Medal of Courage
of the Order of Canada



Insignia of Companion
of the Order of Canada



The Medal of Service
of the Order of Canada

Table 2.2
Order of Canada as established in 1967

Level	Annual Appointments*	Maximum Membership	Post-nominals
Companion	25	150	CC
Medal of Courage	∞	∞	CM
Medal of Service	50	∞	SM

* Provision was made for 50 Companions to be appointed and 100 Medals of Service awarded in the Centennial Year, 1967.

On 21 March 1967, The Queen signed the Letters Patent founding the Order of Canada, with an effective date of 1 July 1967. Simultaneous with the establishment of the Order of Canada, the government passed an Order-in-Council abolishing the tortured Canada Medal that had been created by The Queen's father,

King George VI, in 1943, but which was never awarded. The first appointments to the Order of Canada would subsequently be announced on 6 July 1967, the same day that The Queen, as Sovereign of the Order, invested Governor General Roland Michener as the Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order. The decades-long series of attempts to establish a national order had finally met with success.

Unlike all of the earlier proposals calling for the establishment of a national order, the new Order of Canada proposal did not have a military and civil division. It was to be used to recognize outstanding contributions made in the civilian world. This was borne out in the first appointments made to the Order of Canada. The list of Companions included Lieutenant-General E. L. M. Burns, DSO, OBE, MC, CD, the first Commander of the UNEF in the Middle East, and Major General George R. Pearkes, VC, PC, CB, DSO, MC, CD, former Minister of National Defence and Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, but neither were serving members of the



The Queen with Governor General Michener, who is wearing the very first insignia of the Order of Canada for the first time after Her Majesty invested him, Ottawa, 6 July 1967



General Eedson Louis Millard Burns, CC, DSO, OBE, MC, CD

The United Nations
Emergency Force Medal

Canadian Forces. Of the recipients of the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada, only Air Marshal Wilfred Austin, CB, CBE, DSC, ED, CD, retired Chief of the Air Staff, RCAF, had a military connection.

The Order of Military Merit

With the establishment of the Order of Canada well underway, the Minister of National Defence pushed forward with his own plans for the creation of a broader array of honours to recognize a variety of types of military service, notably meritorious service and gallantry. The absence of recognition for members of the Canadian Forces caused the Minister and Associate Minister to redouble their efforts.



Major-General the Honourable George Randolph Pearkes, VC, PC, CC, CB, DSO, MC, CD

The PMC and ISAC put together a detailed package outlining the need for revising the 1956 honours policy, and the establishment of a comprehensive set of honours for bravery and meritorious service, notably the creation of a Cross and Medal of Courage and an Order of Military Merit. The proposal was examined by Cabinet on 16 March 1967. Hellyer reflected on the absence of a system of honours for members of the Canadian Forces, "as a result of a submission to Cabinet seeking approval for the award of three MBEs and two BEMs to certain members of the Forces, Cabinet on May 5, 1966 agreed in principle to an examination being made of the desirability of establishing a Canadian award for meritorious services."⁹⁹ Hellyer's proposal included an Order of Military Merit "with five degrees, together with an associated decoration for other ranks, to recognize meritorious service in both military operations and peace."¹⁰⁰

Table 2.3
Order of Military Merit, 1966 Proposal

Level	Designation	Appointments	Post-nominals
First Degree	Grand Cross	General and above	GCMM
Second Degree	Chief Commander	Brigadier-General to Lieutenant-General	CCMM
Third Degree	Commander	Lieutenant-Colonel to Colonel	CMM
Fourth Degree	Officer	Captain to Major	OMM
Fifth Degree	Member	Warrant Officers to Lieutenants	MMM
Medal	Decoration for Military Merit	Non-Commissioned Officers	DMM

Designs related to the 1966 Order of Military Merit proposal



Grand Cross



Grand Officer



Commander



Officer



Decoration of Military Merit



Member

Only those “whose service has been exceptionally meritorious” were to be admitted to the new Order.¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note at this early stage how rigid the distribution of the new Order of Military Merit was to be amongst the various ranks of the Canadian Forces. The fact that non-commissioned officers were only eligible for the Decoration for Military Merit, and the very rigid rank corridors for being appointed to the five levels of the Order, make clear that this proposal did not contain any of the flexibility that had been present in Canadian appointments to the Order of the British Empire.

The question of the Order of Military Merit and bravery awards was revisited by Cabinet on 30 June 1967, the day before the Centennial celebrations were set to begin. Cadieux reviewed the proposal for the Order of Military Merit and two bravery awards. During the discussion, questions arose about the necessity for the Order to consist of five levels, especially as the newly announced Order of Canada consisted of only one. The number of annual appointments to the Order and overt focus on recognition for officers was a concern, as was the structure, which to some members “seemed archaic and out of time with the trend towards modernization of the Armed Forces.”¹⁰² Eventually Cabinet agreed that in addition to a set of bravery awards, an as yet unnamed military order be established “together with an associated decoration for other ranks, to recognize meritorious service in both military operations and in peace, provided there be further consultation with the Prime Minister before instituting this Order regarding the possible reduction in the number of degrees of the Order, and that there be a limitation on the granting of the Orders such that no more than 10 percent of the officers and any one rank should receive it.”¹⁰³ No action was forthcoming on the establishment of the Order of Military Merit or companion Decorations for Bravery. Into the fall, the focus was overwhelmingly on celebrating the Centennial and Expo '67, and by December 1967, Prime Minister Pearson had announced his impending retirement. As would later be revealed, a lack of enthusiasm and interest amongst officials in the Privy Council Office for expanding the Canadian honours system was the primary reason for the delay in establishing the Order of Military Merit.

As part of a review undertaken by the Department of the Secretary of State into the bestowal of Commonwealth and foreign honours upon Canadians, the lingering question of the Canadian government resuming the practice of recommending citizens for British gallantry awards was examined. The Government Decorations Committee had received a number of recommendations for gallantry awards and, given that the Medal of Courage of the Order of Canada was not yet functional as an award, consideration was given to continue the awarding of British gallantry

awards,¹⁰⁴ namely appointments to the Order of the British Empire and award of the British Empire Medal for gallantry.

A report of the Government Decorations Committee sent to Pearson by the Secretary of State, Judy LaMarsh, explained "to restore the practice of recommending Canadians for British honours and decorations (other than for valour and outstanding service in time of war and for acts of bravery) would surely be inconsistent with the intention of the government in creating a Canadian order [honours system]."¹⁰⁵ The Prime Minister's Private Secretary, John Hodgson, who had played an important role in the establishment of the Order of Canada, advised Pearson that only Canadian honours should be used henceforth and that Canadian awards should be developed to recognize bravery. Hodgson also noted that the use of "courage awards through British government sh[oul]d be stopped quietly."¹⁰⁶ With this, only nominations for the George Medal and gallantry related Order of the British Empire and British Empire appointments were considered, providing they were submitted prior to March 1968.



The Right Honourable Joseph Philippe Pierre Yves Elliott Trudeau, PC, CC, CH, QC

At the last meeting of Cabinet with Pearson in the chair as Prime Minister, the question of Canadian recommendations for British honours was finally laid to rest. Cabinet agreed that "the practice of recommending the award of British Orders, decorations and medals for acts of bravery be discontinued, and that the Government Decorations Committee be instructed to consider how such acts may be recognized when the relevant circumstances are unsufficient [*sic*] to justify the award of the Medal of Courage of the Order of Canada."¹⁰⁷ It was also at this meeting that Pearson declined to give his approval for the creation of the Order of Military Merit,

not wanting to tie his successor to the decision to create the new Order. Pierre Trudeau had won the Liberal Party leadership and was sworn in as Prime Minister three days later, on 20 April 1968. Shortly thereafter, the new Prime Minister asked the Governor General to dissolve Parliament, and on 25 June 1968, the federal

election concluded. Only essential matters were discussed by Cabinet during this period and it would not be until well into the fall that honours would again reach the Council table.

Officials in the Department of National Defence, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jean Victor Allard, were increasingly frustrated by their inability to gain traction on the need for a system of honours to recognize meritorious service in the Canadian Forces. Aggravated by the lack of progress, Director of Ceremonial, Lieutenant-Colonel N. A. Buckingham (Retired), wrote to his superiors,

Several attempts have been made over the past year and a half to get a submission before Cabinet on an Order of Military Merit (ORMM) for the Canadian Armed Forces. All attempts were thwarted, most within the PC [Privy Council] office, but in the last instance in March 68 by Mr. Pearson himself. Therefore, at that time the Minister of National Defence directed that the submission be withheld pending the formation of a new government.¹⁰⁸

In an effort to overcome what seemed to be opposition from within the Privy Council Office, Buckingham sought out the advice of the Secretary to the Governor General, Esmond Butler. Butler had been intimately involved in the establishment of the Order of



General Jean Victor Allard, CC, CBE, GOQ, DSO, ED, CD



Esmond Unwin Butler, CVO, OC

Canada, and was in frequent contact with Buckingham on matters related to military ceremonies at Rideau Hall. Following a productive meeting with Butler, Buckingham enlisted not only the support of the Secretary to the Governor General, but also of the Governor General himself: "It is my clear impression that much of the resistance to the submission would have been overcome if DND had outside support. To this end I sought the assistance of the Secretary to the Governor General."¹⁰⁹ An enduring friendship was forged, and Butler soon started working behind the scenes to ease the Order of Military Merit proposal back onto the Cabinet table. The results were not instant, as the new Ministry was focused on pressing ahead with its agenda which, although not antagonistic toward the expansion of the honours system, was focused on larger matters.

Mindful of Buckingham and Butler's efforts, Allard directed that the Order of Military Merit proposal, now consisting of three levels, be submitted to the Minister for consideration by Cabinet. Allard's Chief of Personnel, Lieutenant-General E. M. Reyno, reminded the CDS of the ongoing difficulties with the submission in an effort to have Allard broach the matter with the Minister again: "I am sure you are aware of the frustrations we have encountered with the staff of the Privy Council who in the past have caused difficulties in even getting the subject on Cabinet Agenda, in spite of our Minister's signed request."¹¹⁰ The lethargic progress and perception that civil servants were blocking the establishment of the Order of Military Merit elicited a rather blunt reaction from Vice-Admiral Ralph Hennessy: "The implication that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are not worthy of belonging to a Canadian order, as their civilian counterparts in the Order of Canada do, but can be fobbed off with a set of baubles is bound to give cause for resentment among servicemen."¹¹¹ Hennessy was familiar with the honours system and important role it plays in morale, having earned the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery during the Second World War in connection with the ramming and sinking of U-210.

Throughout the following year, the Government Decorations Committee examined the question of a military order and by 5 December 1969, they agreed upon a three-point proposal recommending the establishment of an Order of Military Merit:

- (a) within a compact, integrated system of Canadian awards, there should be a class embracing Military Merit;
- (b) it should comprise three degrees; and
- (c) the criteria on which these awards will be based must be developed within the Armed Forces establishment in light of service considerations.¹¹²

The Government Decorations Committee was recommending that the structure and overall purpose of the new military order “should parallel those of the Order of Canada.”¹¹³

Cadieux, who had succeeded Hellyer as Minister, prepared a proposal to Cabinet on 31 December 1969, one day after Prime Minister Trudeau had announced that Canada would be establishing its own set of bravery awards. This was in relation to the bravery demonstrated aboard HMCS *Kootenay*, which had suffered a catastrophic explosion while participating in exercises off the coast of England in October 1969.¹¹⁴ The explosion and ensuing fire claimed the lives of 9, while 53 members of the crew were injured. The Medal of Courage of the Order of Canada had been found to be insufficient to recognize all types of bravery as early as January 1968 and little effort was put into awarding it. Similarly, the Advisory Council of the Order of Canada had expressed its belief that the Medal of Service and Medal of Courage should be removed from the Order of Canada and replaced with a more extensive honours system.¹¹⁵ Cadieux’s proposal to Cabinet noted that the original direction on “the desirability of establishing Canadian awards for meritorious military service,” dated back to 5 May 1966, and the recognition of five members of the RCAF for their services in the Zambia Petrol Airlift.¹¹⁶ The proposal was never submitted to Cabinet for consideration and the question of an Order of Military Merit was referred to the Government Decorations Committee.



Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Kootenay*

The Government Decorations Committee, having spent considerable time examining the future of the Order of Canada and establishment of a broader honours system, proposed the creation of “three distinct but parallel classes of awards:

- (1) for SERVICE and ACHIEVEMENT (the Order of Canada);
- (2) for BRAVERY; and
- (3) for MILITARY MERIT.

These would constitute a ‘family of Canadian honours’ bound together by certain common design elements and each comprising three grades.”¹¹⁷ This broad proposal was devised in early January 1970. Subsequently, Cadieux wrote to the Prime Minister on 20 March 1970, requesting an early decision on the establishment of the Order of Military Merit and bravery decorations “in the interest of morale”¹¹⁸ and specifically to recognize the brave and meritorious acts rendered aboard the HMCS *Kootenay*.

In late 1970, to facilitate the development of a proposal for a restricted three-leveled Order of Canada, an Order of Military Merit and a set of Canadian bravery decorations, Trudeau asked the Chairman of the Government Decorations Committee, Under-Secretary of State Jules Léger, to bring together an “Interdepartmental Working Group to work out the details for the establishment of a comprehensive system of honours and awards”¹¹⁹ in relation to bravery and military merit. The Working Group completed its report on 8 February 1971, and it was submitted to the Prime Minister for consideration, being submitted to Cabinet for consideration in July 1971. The group would eventually become the Honours Policy Committee.

To Cabinet One Last Time

Cabinet was again seized with matters related to honours in July 1971,¹²⁰ as the members considered the *Report of the Working Group on Honours*, which had been completed in February of the same year by the Working Group. The report called for the creation of a “comprehensive awards programme for Canada.”¹²¹ This was a complete transformation of the nascent Canadian honours system from the somewhat dysfunctional single-leveled Order of Canada and its associated medals, into a more diverse system aimed at recognizing meritorious service in the civil and military spheres and also acts of courage and bravery. Aside from the proposal for the establishment of the Order of Military Merit, the division of the Order of Canada into three levels and the institution of three awards for bravery were also discussed.

In its justification for an Order of Military Merit, the report noted that “the Canadian Armed Forces expect their personnel to submit to the exigencies of service life without question. This, on occasion, demands performance of duty under conditions of great discomfort in trying circumstances for prolonged periods of time.”¹²² The report went on to explain that

*The institution of the Order of Military Merit in three degrees will provide the Canadian Forces with a proven management tool which can be applied to all levels of military endeavour as a reward for both outstanding service of the greatest responsibility as well as exceptional devotion to duty at the lowest levels. Those who are rewarded for their efforts, no matter what their station, will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that their conspicuous contribution has been recognized publically [sic] and officially.*¹²³

Members of Cabinet reviewed the proposal at their meeting on 29 July 1971, and much of the discussion focused on the restructuring of the Order of Canada into three levels and the establishment of the three decorations for bravery, which at this point remained without names. Another element of the discussion related to the transfer of responsibility for all honours administration from the Department of the Secretary of State to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General. This was proposed as a more efficient method of centralizing honours administration under one department, and it was also viewed as the most seamless manner of shielding the growing honours system from partisan interference. The main concern raised in relation to the Order of Military Merit was the two types of membership proposed: ordinary members, who were to be members of the Canadian Forces; and honorary members, who were to be members of Commonwealth and foreign armed forces. Some members of the Cabinet disliked the term ordinary, and it was agreed that this should be dropped. At the end of a lengthy discussion, Cabinet agreed on the package of changes, which included the establishment of the Order of Military Merit in three levels, consisting of members and honorary members.¹²⁴

Governor General Roland Michener approved Order-in-Council 1972-810 on 1 May 1972, which enunciated that the Order would come into being on Dominion Day 1972, and on 10 May 1972, The Queen signed the Letters Patent constituting the Order, countersigned by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. With this the Prime Minister's Office issued a press release explaining:

*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 Reserves.*¹²⁵

At last the Order of Military Merit had become a reality, albeit only on paper. The general acceptance of the Order of Canada over the preceding five years ensured that a fate similar to the failed Canada Medal was unlikely. While many younger members of the CF were not well-versed in the honours system—the Canadian Forces' Decoration, 1967 Centennial Medal and a small number of United Nations Service Medals constituting the breadth of the decorations and medals available to members—the presence of long-serving veterans of the Second World War and Korean War helped to ensure that there was a certain level of continuity when it came to ensuring recognition of meritorious service.

In putting together the press release announcing the creation of the new Order to members of the Canadian Forces, one public affairs officer noted "it will seem strange to many Canadians to learn that a private is eligible for the same Order as a General."¹²⁶ An astute observation given that honours for meritorious service had for so long been restricted to officers, a more equitable system of recognition was about to take root.



The Letters Patent creating the Order of Military Merit bearing the signature of The Queen and the Great Seal of Canada