



Info Ottawa - Vanier

Honourable Mauril Bélanger, M.P.

Winter 2015

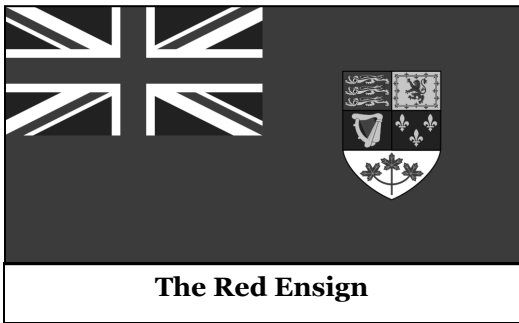


Dear Constituents,

It is with pleasure that I present to you this Winter 2015 edition of *Info Ottawa-Vanier*, which highlights the 50th anniversary of the first raising of our national flag on February 15th, 1965. It contains a brief history of steps leading to the adoption of our flag and a story about Mrs. Joan O'Malley, who sewed the first prototype ever flown. You will also find an image of a poster that relates key moments in the history of the Canadian flag, which I will distribute in every school in the riding. Since the House of Commons does not allow for full colours editions of our householders, the graphic rendition of the Red Ensign, the Pearson Pennant and the poster is in black and white. For a look at the poster and the flags in full and accurate colour, and for more detailed information on the history of the flag, I invite you to visit my website at www.mauril.ca.

CREATING CANADA'S MAPLE LEAF FLAG

From 1867 to 1965, Canada was represented by various versions of the Red Ensign, which featured a Union Jack and Canadian coats of arms on a red background. The latter included three red maple leaves.



The Red Ensign

In 1925, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King asked a Committee of Parliament to research possible designs for a new flag. However no agreement could be reached, particularly with respect whether or not symbols of allegiance to the British crown should be kept. Mackenzie King raised the matter again in 1946, and a Parliamentary Committee proposed a red flag with the Union Jack and a maple leaf. MPs were sharply divided. Veterans wanted to keep the Red Ensign, while Canadian nationalists wanted the country to have a flag with a distinctly Canadian identity.

In 1962, adopting a distinctively Canadian flag became part of the Liberal Party of Canada's platform:

« Within two years of taking office, a new Liberal government will submit to Parliament a design for a flag which cannot be mistaken for the emblem of any other country. When adopted, this will be the flag of Canada ».

In his memoirs, Lester B. Pearson explained what motivated this initiative: « For me, the flag was part of a deliberate design to strengthen national unity, to improve federal-provincial relations, to devise a more appropriate constitution, and to guard against the wrong kind of American penetration. It was our purpose to develop national symbols which would give us pride and confidence and belief in Canada. The flag was a specific promise of our election campaign, specific even in terms of a time limit. We had pledged that within two years of forming a government we would submit to Parliament a proposal for a distinctive Canadian flag. I was heavily committed to this, both politically and personally, as to any promise made ».

On 17 May 1964, Prime Minister Pearson presented his flag proposal to an audience of Royal Canadian Legion members in Winnipeg. Some veterans, who had fought under the Red Ensign in the two world wars, booed and heckled him. The government introduced in the House of Commons later that month a resolution for Canada to adopt a national flag: « That the Government be authorized to take such steps as may be necessary to establish officially as the flag of Canada a flag embodying the emblem proclaimed by His Majesty King George V on November 21, 1921 — three maple leaves conjoined on one stem — in the colours red and white then designated for Canada, the red leaves occupying a field of white between vertical sections of blue on the edges of the flag and also to provide that the Royal Union Flag, generally known as the Union Jack, may continue to be flown as a symbol of Canadian membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and of our allegiance to the Crown ».



The Pearson Pennant

The flag described in the above resolution was Pearson's first choice and is commonly referred to as the Pearson Pennant. The two blue bars represented the two oceans on either side of Canada. The Leader of the Opposition, John Diefenbaker, was opposed to adopting a new flag altogether. He believed Canada already had its own flag in the Red Ensign: « Canada had a flag. It flew over the Headquarters of the Canadian Corps in France in 1918. A meeting of the Mackenzie King Cabinet on 27 October 1943 decided that our army should fly the Canadian red ensign wherever Canadian forces were serving with the forces of other nations. It was officially recognized as Canada's flag by Order-in-Council in 1945 ».

The flag debate in the House of Commons began on 15 June 1964 and lasted until 10 September. Discussions were hostile and bitter. The Conservative caucus was, itself, deeply divided. The eight Conservative MPs from Quebec preferred a flag with no allusion to either the Red Ensign or the fleur de lis. Léon Balcer later explained: « In each caucus meeting, we, the Members of Parliament from Quebec, called for the recognition of the rights of both francophones and anglophones to be part of a modern Canada that would be free from under the thumb of another country, whichever country that may be ».

Pearson and Diefenbaker eventually agreed to the establishment of a Special Committee. The Committee considered and rejected thousands of sketches submitted by the general public, keeping only three. On 29 October 1964, the Committee tabled a report recommending the adoption of a flag with a stylized red maple leaf on a white square with red borders, without any reference to the Red Ensign or the fleur de lis. This design had been proposed by Dr. George Stanley, Dean of Arts at the Royal Military College in Kingston.



The Canadian Flag

Debate resumed in the House of Commons, but no consensus could be reached. At 2:15 a.m. on December 15th, 1964, a free vote resulted in adopting the one-leaved red-and-white flag. 125 Liberals voted in favour and one against, 6 Progressive Conservatives voted in favour and 73 against, 19 Socreds voted in favour and 3 against, 13 New Democrats voted in favour and one against for a total of 163 for and 78 against.

The new flag was adopted by Royal Proclamation on January 28th, 1965, and it was raised for the very first time on Parliament Hill on February 15th of the same year.

Below is a grayscale version of the poster I plan to distribute in every school in the riding prior to the 50th anniversary celebration of our flag, on February 15th, 2015. Please note that the poster which will be distributed is in full colour. You may see it on my website at www.mauril.ca.

1945 to/à 1963

In 1945, a Parliamentary Committee holds meetings at which hundreds of new flag designs are tabled. People increasingly favour a distinctly Canadian flag. The government considers a modified Red Ensign but there is little public enthusiasm for this.

From 1950 to 1963, the flag question is raised frequently in Parliament. Competitions for a new design are held regularly.

The Canadian Corps Association and the Royal Canadian Legion organize in favour of the Red Ensign and against any new flag which would not include the symbolism of Great Britain.

En 1945, un comité parlementaire organise des audiences où des centaines d'idées de drapeau sont présentées. Il est clair que les gens veulent un véritable drapeau canadien. Le gouvernement envisage une version modifiée du Red Ensign, mais il n'aide ne soulève pas l'enthousiasme de la population.

De 1950 à 1963, la question du drapeau revient fréquemment surface au Parlement. On tient régulièrement des concours pour trouver une nouvelle idée.

L'association du Corps canadien et la Légion royale canadienne se prononcent pour le Red Ensign et contre tout nouveau drapeau qui n'inclurait aucun symbole britannique.

1963 to/à 1965

Lester B Pearson, elected Prime Minister in 1963, promises Canada a new flag. He addresses a Legion convention on May 17, 1964. - The time has come to replace the Red Ensign with a distinctive maple leaf flag. Prominent MP John Matheson leads the charge for a new Canadian flag.

On June 15 of that year, Pearson proposes a new flag, dubbed "The Pearson Pennant". In the fall, Parliament's Flag Committee studies 2,000 designs and listens to dozens of historians and heraldic experts.

The Flag Committee recommends the single-leaf design, leading to a lengthy debate in Parliament. In the early hours of December 15, 1964, the House of Commons adopts the Maple Leaf Flag by a vote of 163 to 78.

Lester B. Pearson, élu premier ministre en 1963, promet de doter le pays d'un nouveau drapeau. Le 17 mai 1964, Pearson, à une convention de la Légion, affirme qu'il est temps de remplacer le Red Ensign par un drapeau arborant une feuille d'érable. Le député bien en vue John Matheson prend les rênes du projet.

Le 15 juin de cette même année, Pearson présente son idée de drapeau, que l'on surnomme dès lors le « Pennant de Pearson ». En septembre et octobre, le Comité parlementaire du drapeau examine 2 000 modèles et reçoit des dizaines d'historiens et d'héraldistes.

Le Comité du drapeau recommande celui à une feuille. Un long débat s'en suit au Parlement. Au petit matin du 15 décembre 1964, la Chambre des communes adopte l'unionfleur à 163 contre 78.

1965 to/à 2015

The new Canadian flag is raised for the first time.

The Queen proclaims the new flag on January 28, 1965. On February 15, 1965, the red and white Maple Leaf Flag becomes the official flag of Canada. Economist journalist George Bain writes the flag "looked bold and clean, and distinctively our own".

Whether flying over a school or a town hall, an embassy abroad, a Canadian Forces base or an Olympic podium, the Flag and the maple leaf are now recognized worldwide as the distinctive symbols of Canada's sovereignty, and are a source of pride to all Canadians.

La Reine proclame le nouveau drapeau le 28 janvier 1965. Le 15 février 1965, l'unionfleur rouge et blanche devient le drapeau officiel du Canada. L'éminent journaliste George Bain écrit que le drapeau a une allure audacieuse et propre, qui nous représente bien.

Que ce soit au-dessus d'une école ou d'un hôtel de ville, d'une ambassade à l'étranger, d'une base des Forces canadiennes ou encore d'un podium olympique, le drapeau et la feuille d'érable sont maintenant reconnus dans le monde entier comme des symboles distinctifs de la souveraineté du Canada et sont une source de fierté pour tous les Canadiens.

MP Matheson (top) increasingly favours a red and white flag with a single maple leaf. George Stanley proposes two designs.



Le député Matheson soutient de plus en plus un drapeau rouge et blanc orné d'une seule feuille d'érable. George Stanley propose deux modèles.



The new Canadian flag is raised for the first time.



Le nouveau drapeau canadien est hissé pour la première fois.



The new Canadian flag is raised for the first time.



Le nouveau drapeau canadien est hissé pour la première fois.




A LAST MINUTE REQUEST

February 15th, 1965, is a day with great historical significance for Canada; the red and white Maple Leaf flag flew atop the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill for the very first time. For Ottawa resident Joan O'Malley, an equally significant date was November 6th, 1964, when her father called her with an urgent request. He needed her help with a last-minute sewing project — one that she will never forget.

A snowstorm had hit the national capital, and 20-year-old Joan had just reached home from work and was settling in for a quiet evening with her husband, Brian O'Malley. Her father, Ken Donovan, an assistant purchasing director with the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission, asked her to use her Singer sewing machine to create prototypes of the three designs being considered for Canada's new national emblem.

Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson had requested that the three prototypes be delivered to 24 Sussex Drive early the next morning so he could see them flown from a flagpole at his secondary residence on Harrington Lake. Joan O'Malley rose to the occasion that night and met the Prime Minister's deadline.

Fifty years later, on November 6th, 2014, the Government of Canada paid tribute to Mrs. O'Malley, now 70 years old. Her important contribution was recognized at a ceremony on Parliament Hill. A big thank you to Joan O'Malley, a dedicated Canadian who played a unique role in the history of our national flag!



Joan O'Malley and her sewing machine

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