

## Canada Day

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Canada Day (French: *Fête du Canada*) is the national day of Canada, a federal statutory holiday celebrating the anniversary of the July 1, 1867, enactment of the British North America Act, 1867 (today called the Constitution Act, 1867), which united three colonies into a single country called Canada within the British Empire. Originally called Dominion Day (French: *Le Jour de la Confédération*), the holiday was renamed in 1982, the year the Canada Act was passed. Canada Day observances take place throughout Canada as well as among Canadians internationally.

### Commemoration

Frequently referred to as "Canada's birthday", particularly in the popular press, the occasion marks the joining of the British North American colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada into a federation of four provinces (the Province of Canada being divided, in the process, into Ontario and Quebec) on July 1, 1867. Canada became a kingdom in its own right on that date, but the British parliament and Cabinet kept limited rights of political control over the new country that were shed by stages over the years until the last vestiges were surrendered in 1982, when the Constitution Act patriated the Canadian constitution.

Under the federal Holidays Act, Canada Day is observed on July 1, unless that date falls on a Sunday, in which case July 2 is the statutory holiday, although celebratory events generally take place on July 1, even though it is not the legal holiday. If it falls on a Saturday, any businesses normally closed that day will generally dedicate the following Monday as a day off.

### Activities

Most communities across the country will host organized celebrations for Canada Day, usually outdoor public events, such as parades, carnivals, festivals, barbecues, air and maritime shows, fireworks, and free musical concerts, as well as citizenship ceremonies for new citizens. There is no standard mode of celebration for Canada Day; professor of International Relations at the

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University of Oxford Jennifer Welsh said of this: "Canada Day, like the country, is endlessly decentralized. There doesn't seem to be a central recipe for how to celebrate it chalk it up to the nature of the federation." However, the locus of the celebrations is the national capital, Ottawa, Ontario, where large concerts and cultural displays are held on Parliament Hill, with the governor general and prime minister typically officiating, though the monarch or another member of the Royal Family may also attend or take the governor general's place. Smaller events are mounted in other parks around the city and in Gatineau, Quebec

Given the federal nature of the holiday, celebrating Canada Day can be a cause of friction in the province of Quebec, where the holiday is overshadowed by Quebec's National Holiday, on June 24. For example, the federal government funds Canada Day events at the Old Port of Montreal—an area run by a federal Crown corporation—while the National Holiday parade is a grassroots effort that has been met with pressure to cease, even from federal officials. The nature of the event has also been met with criticism outside of Quebec, such as that given by Ottawa Citizen columnist David Warren, who said in 2007: "The Canada of the government-funded paper flag-waving and painted faces—the 'new' Canada that is celebrated each year on what is now called 'Canada Day'—has nothing controversially Canadian about it. You could wave a different flag, and choose another face paint, and nothing would be lost."

Canada Day also coincides with Quebec's Moving Day, when many fixed-lease apartment rental terms expire. The bill changing the province's moving day from May 1 to July 1 was introduced by a federalist member of the Quebec National Assembly, Jérôme Choquette in 1973, in order not to affect children still in school in the month of May

### International celebrations

Canadian expatriates will organize Canada Day activities in their local area on or near the date of the holiday. For instance, since 2006, annual Canada Day celebrations have been held at Trafalgar Square—the location of Canada House—in London, England; initiated by the Canadian community in the United Kingdom, endorsed by the Canadian High Commission, and organized by a private promotions company, the event features Canadian performers and a demonstration of street hockey, among other activities. Annual celebrations also take place in Hong Kong, entitled Canada D'eh and held on June 30 at Lan Kwai Fong, where an estimated attendance of 12,000 was reported in 2008; in Afghanistan, where members of the Canadian Forces mark the holiday at their base and in Mexico, at the Royal Canadian Legion in Mexico, Chapala, and the Canadian Club in Ajijic. In Shanghai, China, Canada Day celebrations are held by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai at the Bund Beach.

Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario, have, since the 1950s, celebrated both Dominion or

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Canada Day and the United States' Independence Day with the International Freedom Festival; a massive fireworks display over the Detroit River, the strait separating the two cities, is held annually with hundreds of thousands of spectators attending. A similar event occurs at the Friendship Festival, a joint celebration between Fort Erie, Ontario, and neighbouring Buffalo, New York, and towns and villages throughout Maine, New Brunswick, and Quebec come together to celebrate both anniversaries together.

### History

The enactment of the British North America Act, 1867 (today called the Constitution Act, 1867), which confederated Canada, was celebrated on July 1, 1867, with the ringing of the bells at the Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto and "bonfires, fireworks and illuminations, excursions, military displays and musical and other entertainments", as described in contemporary accounts. On June 20 of the following year, Governor General the Viscount Monck issued a royal proclamation asking for Canadians to celebrate the anniversary of Confederation, However, the holiday was not established statutorily until 1879, when it was designated as Dominion Day, in reference to the designation of the country as a Dominion in the British North America Act. The holiday was initially not dominant in the national calendar; any celebrations were mounted by local communities and the governor general hosted a party at Rideau Hall. No official celebrations were therefore held until 1917 and then none again for a further decade—the golden and diamond anniversaries of Confederation, respectively.

In 1946, Philéas Côté, a Quebec member of the House of Commons, introduced a private member's bill to rename Dominion Day as Canada Day. His bill was passed quickly by the House of Commons but was stalled by the Senate, which returned the bill to the Commons with the recommendation that the holiday be renamed The National Holiday of Canada, an amendment that effectively killed the bill.

Beginning in 1958, the Canadian government began to orchestrate Dominion Day celebrations. That year, then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker requested that Secretary of State Ellen Fairclough put together appropriate events to mark Dominion Day, with a budget of \$14,000. Parliament was traditionally in session on July 1, but Fairclough persuaded Diefenbaker and the rest of the federal Cabinet to attend. Official celebrations thereafter consisted usually of Trooping the Colour ceremonies on Parliament Hill in the afternoon and evening, followed by a mass band concert and fireworks display, though Fairclough, who became Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, later expanded the bills to include performing folk and ethnic groups and the day became more casual and family oriented. Canada's centennial in 1967 is often seen as an important milestone in the history of Canadian patriotism, and in Canada's maturing as a distinct, independent country, after which Dominion Day became more popular with average Canadians. Into the late 1960s, nationally televised, multi-cultural concerts held in Ottawa were added, and the fête became known as Festival Canada; after 1980 the Canadian

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government began to promote the celebrating of Dominion Day beyond the national capital, giving grants and aid to cities across the country to help fund local activities.

Some Canadians were, by the early 1980s, informally referring to the holiday as Canada Day. However, this practice did cause some controversy: Numerous politicians, journalists, and authors, such as Robertson Davies, decried the change at the time, and some continue to maintain that it was illegitimate and an unnecessary break with tradition. Proponents argued that the name Dominion Day was a holdover from the colonial era, an argument given some impetus by the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, and others asserted that an alternative was needed as the term does not translate well into French. Conversely, these arguments were disputed by those who claimed Dominion was widely misunderstood, and conservatively inclined commenters saw the change as part of a much larger attempt by Liberals to "re-brand" or re-define Canadian history. Columnist Andrew Cohen called Canada Day a term of "crushing banality" and criticized it as "a renunciation of the past [and] a misreading of history, laden with political correctness and historical ignorance".

The holiday was officially renamed as a result of a private member's bill that, on July 9, 1982, two years after receiving first reading in the House of Commons, there received third reading when only twelve Members of Parliament were present. (This was actually eight members less than a quorum, but, according to parliamentary rules, the quorum is enforceable only at the start of a sitting or when a member calls attention to it.) The bill was passed by the House in five minutes, without debate, which inspired "grumblings about the underhandedness of the process". It met with stronger resistance in the Senate—some Senators objected to the change of name; Ernest Manning, who argued that the rationale for the change was based on a misperception of the name, and George McIlraith, who did not agree with the manner in which the bill had been passed and urged the government to proceed in a more "dignified way" but finally passed. With the granting of Royal Assent, the name was officially changed to Canada Day on October 27, 1982.

As the anniversary of Confederation, Dominion Day, and later Canada Day, was the date set for a number of important events, such as the first national radio network hookup by the Canadian National Railway (1927); the inauguration of the CBC's cross-country television broadcast, with Governor General Vincent Massey's Dominion Day speech from Parliament Hill (1958); the flooding of the Saint Lawrence Seaway (1958); the first colour television transmission in Canada (1966); the inauguration of the Order of Canada (1967); and the establishment of "O Canada" as the country's national anthem (1980). Other events fell on the same day coincidentally, such as the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916—shortly after which Newfoundland recognized July 1 as Memorial Day to commemorate the Newfoundland Regiment's heavy losses during the battle and the enactment of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923—leading Chinese-Canadians to refer to July 1 as Humiliation Day and boycott Dominion Day

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celebrations until the act was repealed in 1947.

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