



## THE GREAT SEAL OF CANADA

The Great Seal of Canada is one of the oldest and most venerated instruments of our government. Since the earliest days of our nation, Canada's most important documents have been made official through its imprint. The Great Seal signifies the power and authority of the Crown flowing from the sovereign to our parliamentary government.

The Great Seal has both ceremonial and administrative purposes. Each time a new governor general is installed in Canada, he or she is solemnly charged with custody of the Seal as representative of the Crown. It is used on all State documents, such as Royal proclamations and commissions issued for the appointment of lieutenant governors, Cabinet ministers, senators and judges. The presence of the Seal melds together the notions of authenticity, authority and the will of the Crown, while at the same time lending a certain prestige to a document.

Our country's Great Seal is uniquely Canadian. It has been in existence since Confederation, yet it has changed, as currency changes, with each successive reign. The present Great Seal was made by the Royal Canadian Mint and bears the effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in her robes, holding the orb and sceptre, and sitting on the Coronation Chair, in Westminster Abbey. The bilingual inscription reads: REINE DU CANADA ELIZABETH II QUEEN OF CANADA. (Previous Great Seals were inscribed in Latin.) It is made of steel, weighs 3.75 kg and is 12.7 cm in diameter.

The governor general is the official keeper of the Great Seal; he or she takes an oath to this effect at the installation ceremony. During the swearing-in ceremony of a new ministry, the minister of Industry, who is at the same time the registrar general of Canada under the *Department of Industry Act*, becomes the keeper of the Seal on a day-to-day basis. The deputy minister of the department serves as the deputy registrar general.

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