

= Victoria Cross (Canada) =

The Victoria Cross (French : Croix de Victoria) , created in 1993 , is a military decoration and the highest award within the Canadian honours system , taking precedence over all other orders , decorations , and medals . It is awarded by either the Canadian monarch or his or her viceregal representative , the Governor General of Canada , to any member of the Canadian Forces or allies serving under or with Canadian military command for extraordinary valour and devotion to duty while facing hostile forces . Whereas in many other Commonwealth countries the relevant version of the Victoria Cross can only be awarded for actions against the enemy in a wartime setting , the Canadian government has a broader definition of the term enemy , and so the Victoria Cross can be awarded for action against armed mutineers , pirates , or other such hostile forces without war being officially declared . Recipients are entitled to use the post @-@ nominal letters VC (for both English and French) and also to receive an annuity of C \$ 3 @,@ 000 . The decoration has not been awarded since its inception .

= = Origin = =

The original Victoria Cross was created via a Royal Warrant issued on 29 January 1856 with the royal sign @-@ manual of Queen Victoria , and was intended to recognize demonstrations of gallantry during the Crimean War , regardless of either a man 's social status or his record of service . Initially , the Victoria Cross could not be conferred on colonial troops , until Major Charles Heaphy received the medal for his actions under British command in 1864 , after which the Victoria Cross was made available to all " local forces under imperial command . " The cross could also not be awarded posthumously until the policy was reversed in 1902 .

Until 1972 , 81 members of the Canadian military (including those from Newfoundland) and 13 Canadians serving in British units had been awarded the Victoria Cross . After that date , however , the Canadian honours system was overhauled , and the Victoria Cross was eliminated from the official list of honours , instigating a decades @-@ long debate on whether or not to reinstate the decoration . The prime minister at the time , Pierre Trudeau , regularly dodged questions about the Victoria Cross , stating that " only Canadians should receive Canadian decorations . " It was his successor , Brian Mulroney , who set up in 1987 a committee to look into the creation of a Canadian Victoria Cross as part of a new series of military honours . Although the committee did not recommend the Victoria Cross ? names such as the Canada Cross and the Cross of Military Valour were put forward ? the creation of an Australian Victoria Cross in 1991 and pressure from The Globe and Mail and advocacy groups , such as the Monarchist League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion , forced the plans to be amended ; in 1991 , a private member 's bill received all @-@ party support in the House of Commons , following which the Victoria Cross , along with other Canadian military valour decorations , were on 31 December 1992 formally requested by Mulroney . The request was approved with the issue of letters patent by Queen Elizabeth II on 2 February of the following year , thereby ceasing Canadian dependence on the British honours system .

= = Criteria = =

The Victoria Cross is awarded for " the most conspicuous bravery , a daring or pre @-@ eminent act of valour or self @-@ sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty , in the presence of the enemy " at any point after 1 January 1993 , may be presented posthumously , and , like its British counterpart , may be revoked . The main distinction between the Victoria Cross and the Cross of Valour is the specific reference to " the enemy " , which the Canadian government has defined as a force hostile towards the Canadian Crown , including armed mutineers , rebels , rioters , and pirates , meaning that the Queen @-@ in @-@ Council does not officially have to declare war to give acknowledgement of the existence of a hostile force that fits the official description . Thus , a Canadian serving as part of a peacekeeping operation is eligible to be awarded the Victoria Cross if the service member fulfils the above criteria .

In the case of a gallant and daring act having been performed by a squadron , ship 's company , or detached body of individuals (such as a security detachment) in which all persons were deemed equally brave and deserving of the Victoria Cross , a ballot is to be drawn ; the commissioned and non @-@ commissioned officers each select one of their own , and the private soldiers or seamen select from amongst themselves two individuals .

= = Conferment = =

The process of awarding the Victoria Cross may take place in two ways : One is through a recommendation by the Decorations and Commendations Advisory Committee , which is a part of the Department of National Defence and has six members , one appointed by the governor general and the rest by the chief of the Defence Staff . Alternatively , a field commander can submit a name for consideration , though permission must be obtained from the governor general before the award can be presented . Recipients are entitled to receive an annuity from the federal Canadian Crown ; per the Canadian gallantry awards order issued in January 2005 , members of the Canadian Forces or those who joined the British forces while domiciled in Canada or Newfoundland prior to 31 March 1949 , after receiving the Victoria Cross , be granted C \$ 3 @,@ 000 each year . Previously , Canadians who were posthumously awarded the British Victoria Cross were given special headstones at their burial sites in Commonwealth War Graves and other cemeteries .

To date , no Canadian Victoria Cross has been conferred ; Smokey Smith , who died in 2005 , was the last Canadian recipient of the then pan @-@ Commonwealth Victoria Cross , receiving it from King George VI in 1945 . Prior to Queen Elizabeth II 's re @-@ dedication of the Vimy Memorial on 7 April 2007 , there was speculation she would present a Canadian Victoria Cross to her then @-@ prime minister , Stephen Harper , offering it in recognition of the gallantry of the Unknown Soldier , as representative of all Canadian forces casualties of combat . The proposal was met with a mixed response from members of the Royal Canadian Legion and Canadian Forces , detractors feeling that the Unknown Soldier should not be elevated above his other fallen comrades . It had also been agreed at the time of the Unknown Soldier 's repatriation that no award or decoration would be bestowed on the remains . No decision was taken about the awarding of the Canadian Victoria Cross to the Canadian Unknown Soldier .

Near the end of Canada 's role in the Afghanistan War , concerns were raised about the stringency of the criteria that needed to be met to receive the Victoria Cross . Other countries with a Victoria Cross had awarded it numerous times since the end of the Second World War , some members of the Australian , New Zealand , and British armed forces receiving the decoration for their actions during the Afghan and Iraq wars of the 2000s . Members of the Canadian Armed Forces questioned why some actions by Canadians were deemed worthy only of the Star of Military Valour ; citations for individuals who 'd received the imperial Victoria Cross during the First World War were very similar to those for Canadians who were presented with the Star of Military Valour during the war in Afghanistan . This led then Chief of the Defence Staff , Walter Natynczyk , to create a special committee to review the matter . The Department of National Defence 's Directorate of Honours and Recognition explained concepts of war had changed since the mid @-@ 20th century and Canada had also developed a more elaborate honours system .

= = Appearance and display = =

The design of the Canadian medal is derived from that of the British original , which was the creation of Albert , Prince Consort , royal consort to Queen Victoria . Canada 's Victoria Cross is thus a cross pattée with straight arms , 38 millimetres (1 @.@ 5 in) across in each direction , and made out of bronze coloured alloy , the obverse bearing a lion crowned and statant guardant , similar to that which forms the crest of the Royal Arms of Canada , standing upon a representation of St. Edward 's Crown , which itself rests above a semi @-@ circular scroll . On the reverse is a raised circle for engraving the date of the act of gallantry along with the name , rank , and unit of the recipient . The medal is suspended from a link forming the letter V attached to a bar adorned on the

front with laurel leaves , and on the reverse with the name , rank , and unit of the medal 's recipient , all cast in the same metal as the medal , while the ribbon , also 38 mm wide , is solid crimson in colour . Cathy Bursey @-@ Sabourin , Fraser Herald of the Canadian Heraldic Authority , and Bruce W. Beatty , however , made certain modifications for the Canadian Victoria Cross , the most notable being the inclusion of Canadian flora as decoration and the alteration of the inscription on the scroll from FOR VALOUR to the Latin translation , PRO VALORE , so as to accommodate Canada 's two official languages . In 2008 , Citizens for a Canadian Republic 's leader , Tom Freda , publicly objected to the decoration 's name and appearance , with what he saw as its " objectionable colonial symbolism , " royal iconography , and a shape offensive to Muslims and Jews .

With Canada at war for the first time since its version of the Victoria Cross was created , preparations for a physical cast of the medal were initiated in 2006 , when a committee called the Victoria Cross Production Planning Group was formed under the leadership of the Chancellery of Honours at Rideau Hall . It originally consisted of representatives from the Department of National Defence , Veterans Affairs Canada , and the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General of Canada , and the group later expanded to include individuals from the Department of Canadian Heritage , Natural Resources Canada , and the Royal Canadian Mint , with assistance provided by the Queen and the British Ministry of Defence . Following their research and deliberations , the first Victoria Cross decoration was struck in 2007 , as confirmed by Deputy Herald Chancellor Emmanuelle Sajous , and the medal was officially released to the public on 16 May 2008 by Governor General Michaëlle Jean at Rideau Hall . It was one of 20 cast , each of which is composed of three groupings of metals : that of a Russian cannon captured at the siege of Sevastopol (1854 ? 1855) , donated by Queen Elizabeth II ; a Confederation Medal , created to mark Canada 's confederation in 1867 ; and a selection of metals from each of Canada 's regions . These were cast , rather than struck , continuing the tradition started in the United Kingdom when it was found the metal alloy was too brittle for striking , and finished at the Royal Canadian Mint . The first two were sent to Buckingham Palace for addition to the British Royal Collection and other specimens were kept as part of the Crown Collection at Rideau Hall , as well as at the Department of National Defence , Library and Archives Canada , and the Canadian War Museum .

As the apex of the Canadian system of honours , the Victoria Cross is to be worn before all other Canadian decorations and insignia of orders , including the Order of Merit and the Order of Canada . It is worn as a medal , suspended from a medal bar on the left chest , unless protocol calls for a ribbon bar , which consists of a crimson ribbon with a miniature bronze Victoria Cross at its centre . Should an individual receive multiple awards of the Victoria Cross , additional bronze medal bars are added to the ribbon and further miniatures are placed evenly on the ribbon bar , reflecting the number of crosses the wearer has earned .