

= Postal codes in Canada =

A Canadian postal code is a six @-@ character string that forms part of a postal address in Canada . Like British and Dutch postcodes , Canada 's postal codes are alphanumeric . They are in the format A1A 1A1 , where A is a letter and 1 is a digit , with a space separating the third and fourth characters . As of September 2014 , there were 855 @,@ 815 postal codes using Forward Sortation Areas from A0A in Newfoundland to Y1A in the Yukon .

Canada Post provides a free postal code look @-@ up tool on its website , via its mobile application , and sells hard @-@ copy directories and CD @-@ ROMs . Many vendors also sell validation tools , which allow customers to properly match addresses and postal codes . Hard @-@ copy directories can also be consulted in all post offices , and some libraries .

When writing out the postal address for a location within Canada , the postal code follows the abbreviation for the province or territory .

= = History = =

= = = City postal zones = = =

Numbered postal zones were first used in Toronto in 1925 . Mail to a Toronto address in zone 5 would be addressed in this format :

37 Bloor Street West
Toronto 5 , Ontario

As of 1943 , Toronto was divided into 14 zones , numbered from 1 to 15 , except that 7 and 11 were unused , and there was a 2B zone .

By the early 1960s , other cities in Canada had been divided into postal zones , including Quebec , Montreal , Ottawa , Winnipeg and Vancouver as well as Toronto . For example , an address in Vancouver would be addressed as :

804 Robson Street ,
Vancouver 1 , B. C

In the late 1960s , however , the Post Office began implementing a three @-@ digit zone number scheme in major cities to replace existing one and two @-@ digit zone numbers , starting in Montreal , Toronto and Vancouver . For example , an address in Metropolitan Toronto would be addressed as :

1253 Bay Street
Toronto 185 , Ontario

Toronto 's renumbering took effect 1 May 1969 , accompanied by an advertising campaign under the slogan " Your number is up " . However , with impending plans for a national postal code system , Postmaster General Eric Kierans announced that the Post Office would begin cancelling the new three @-@ digit city zone system . Companies changed their mail addressing at their own expense , only to find the new zoning would prove to be short @-@ lived .

= = = Planning = = =

As the largest Canadian cities were growing in the 1950s and 1960s , the volumes of mail passing through the country 's postal system also grew , reaching billions by the 1950s , and tens of billions by the mid @-@ 1960s . Consequently , it was becoming progressively more difficult for employees who handsorted mail to memorize and keep track of all the individual letter @-@ carrier routes within each city .

New technology that allowed mail to be delivered faster also contributed to the pressure for these employees to properly sort the mail . Canada was one of the last Western countries to get a nationwide postal code system .

A report tabled in the House of Commons in 1969 dealt with the expected impact of " environmental

change " on the Post Office operations over the following 25 years . A key recommendation was the " establishment of a task force to determine the nature of the automation and mechanization the Post Office should adopt , which might include design of a postal code " .

= = = Implementation = = =

In December 1969 , Communications Minister Eric Kierans announced that a six @-@ character postal code would be introduced , superseding the three @-@ digit zone system . He later tabled a report in February 1970 , entitled " A Canadian Public Address Postal Coding System " , submitted by the firm of Samson , Belair , Simpson , Riddell Inc .

The introduction of the postal code with a test in Ottawa on 1 April 1971 . Coding of Ottawa was followed by a provincial @-@ level rollout of the system in Manitoba , and the system was gradually implemented in the rest of the country from 1972 to 1974 , although the nationwide use of the code by the end of 1974 was only 38 @.@ 2 per cent .

The introduction of such a code system allowed Canada Post to speed up easily , as well as simplify , the flow of mail in the country , with sorting machines being able to handle 26 640 objects an hour . However , when the automated sorting system was initially conceived , the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and other relevant unions objected to it , mainly because the wages of those who ran the new automated machines were much lower than those who had hand @-@ sorted mail .

The unions ended up staging job action and public information campaigns , with the message that they did not want people and business to use postal codes on their mail . The union declared 20 March 1975 National " Boycott the Postal Code " Day , also demanding a reduction in the work week from 40 to 30 hours . The boycott was called off in February 1976 .

One 1975 advertisement in the Toronto magazine Byliner generated controversy by showing a man writing a postal code on the bottom of a thonged woman with the following ditty :

" We 're not ' stringing ' you along ,
Use postal codes ? you 'll ' thing our ' thong ' ,
Don 't be cheeky ? you 've all got ' em
Please include them on the bottom . "

The advertisement was denounced as " sexist garbage " in the House of Commons by NDP MP John Rodriguez , prompting an apology from Postmaster General Bryce Mackasey .

= = Components of a postal code = =

= = = Forward sortation areas = = =

A forward sortation area (FSA) is a geographical region in which all postal codes start with the same three characters . The first letter of an FSA code denotes a particular " postal district " , which , outside of Quebec and Ontario , corresponds to an entire province or territory .

Owing to Quebec 's and Ontario 's large populations , those two provinces are sub @-@ divided into three and five postal districts respectively , and each has at least one urban area so populous that it has a dedicated postal district (" H " for the Montréal region , and " M " for Toronto) . On the other hand , the low populations in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (NWT) mean that even after Nunavut separated from the Northwest Territories and became its own territory in 1999 , they continue to share a postal district .

The digit specifies if the FSA is urban or rural . A zero indicates a wide @-@ area rural region , while all other digits indicate urban areas . The second letter represents a specific rural region , an entire medium @-@ sized city , or a section of a major metropolitan area .

A directory of FSAs is provided , divided into separate articles by postal district . Individual FSA lists are in a tabular format , with the numbers (known as zones) going across the table and the second letter going down the table .

The FSA lists specify all communities covered by each rural FSA . Medium @-@ sized cities may have one dedicated FSA , while larger cities have more than one FSA within their limits .

For FSAs spanning more than one city , the city which is allocated the most codes in each such FSA is listed . For cities with a small number of FSAs (but more than one) , the lists specify the relative location of each FSA in those cities . For cities with a large number of FSAs , applicable neighbourhoods and boroughs are specified .

= = = Local delivery units = = =

The last three characters denote a local delivery unit (LDU) . An LDU denotes a specific single address or range of addresses , which can correspond to an entire small town , a significant part of a medium @-@ sized town , a single side of a city block in larger cities , a single large building or a portion of a very large one , a single (large) institution such as a university or a hospital , or a business that receives large volumes of mail on a regular basis .

LDUs ending in zero correspond to postal facilities , from post offices and small franchised retail postal outlets all the way up to sortation plants . In urban areas , LDUs may be specific postal carriers ' routes . In rural areas where direct door @-@ to @-@ door delivery is not available , an LDU can describe a set of post office boxes or a rural route . LDU 9Z9 is used exclusively for Business Reply Mail . In rural FSAs , the first two characters are usually assigned in alphanumerical order by the name of each community .

LDU 9Z0 refers to large regional distribution centre facilities , and is also used as a placeholder , appearing in some regional postmarks such as the " K0H 9Z0 " which formerly appeared on purely local mail within the Kingston , Ontario area .

= = Number of possible postal codes = =

Postal codes do not include the letters D , F , I , O , Q or U , and the first position also does not make use of the letters W or Z. This means the maximum number of FSAs available is 3 @, @ 600 . With 2 @, @ 000 possible LDUs in each FSA , there is a theoretical limit of 7 @. @ 2 million postal codes . The practical limit is a bit lower , as Canada Post reserves some FSAs for special functions , such as for test or promotional purposes , (e.g. the H0H 0H0 for Santa Claus , see below) as well as for sorting mail bound for destinations outside Canada . The current Statistics Canada estimate of over 830 @, @ 000 active postal codes represents about 12 % of the entire postal code " space " , leaving more than ample room for expansion .

= = Urbanization = =

" Urbanization " is the name Canada Post uses to refer to the process where it replaces a rural postal code (a code with a zero as its second character) with urban postal codes . The vacated rural postal code can then be assigned to another community or retired . Canada Post decides when to urbanize a certain community when its population reaches a certain level , though different factors may also be involved .

For example , in early 2008 , the postal code G0N 3M0 (covering Sainte @-@ Catherine @-@ de @-@ la @-@ Jacques @-@ Cartier , Fossambault @-@ sur @-@ le @-@ Lac and Lac @-@ Saint @-@ Joseph , Quebec) was urbanized to postal codes beginning with G3N to remove ambiguities and confusions caused by similar street names . Unique among province @-@ wide districts , New Brunswick (postal district E) is completely urbanized , its rural codes having been phased out .

= = Santa Claus = =

In 1974 , staff at Canada Post 's Montreal office were noticing a considerable number of letters addressed to Santa Claus entering the postal system , and those letters were being treated as undeliverable . Since employees handling those letters did not want the writers , mostly young

children , to be disappointed at the lack of response , they started answering the letters themselves .

The amount of mail sent to Santa Claus increased every Christmas , up to the point that Canada Post established an official Santa Claus letter @-@ response program in 1983 . By 2011 , Santa 's mail was being handled with the assistance of eleven thousand volunteers , mostly current or former postal workers , at multiple locations across Canada devoting an average twenty @-@ one hours to this seasonal task .

Approximately one million letters are addressed to Santa Claus each Christmas , including some originating outside of Canada , and all of them are answered in the same language in which they are written . Canada Post introduced a special address for mail to Santa Claus , complete with its own postal code :

SANTA CLAUS
NORTH POLE H0H 0H0
CANADA

In French , Santa 's name Père Noël translates as " Father Christmas " , addressed as :

PÈRE NOËL
PÔLE NORD H0H 0H0
CANADA

The postal code H0H 0H0 was chosen for this special seasonal use as it reads as " Ho ho ho " .

The H0- prefix is an anomaly : the 0 indicates a very small , rural village , but H is used to designate Montreal , the second @-@ largest city in Canada . As such , the H0- prefix is almost completely empty . H0M , assigned to the international Akwesasne tribal reserve on the Canada @-@ US border , is the only other H0- postal code in active use .

In 2013 , Santa Claus was dragged into the ongoing Arctic sovereignty debate to support Canadian territorial claims extending to the North Pole . In response to attacks from Conservative MP Paul Calandra , parliamentary secretary to then @-@ Prime Minister Stephen Harper , Justin Trudeau , at the time leader of the third party Liberals , stated " Everyone knows that Santa Claus is Canadian . His postal code is H0H 0H0 . "

= = Transition points to the Canadian Forces Postal Service = =

For transition of mail from the civilian to the Canadian Forces Postal Service , the postal codes of the three corresponding military post offices on Canadian soil are used . These being , depending upon the final destination .

the Fleet Mail Offices (FMO) in Victoria , BC : V9A 7N2

FMO in Halifax , NS : B3K 5X5

the Canadian Forces Post Office (CFPO) in Belleville , ON : K8N 5W6

These postal codes each represent a number of military post offices abroad , which are specified not by postal code but by CFPO or FMO number . The LDUs in this case corresponding not so much to a physical as to a virtual delivery unit since mail is not delivered locally but is forwarded to the actual delivery units at Canadian military bases and ships abroad .

Name

Slot #

PO Box 5053 Stn Forces

Belleville ON K8N 5W6

CANADA

In this example , Canada Post will deliver to the CFPO at Belleville and the Canadian Forces Postal System will continue transport to the addressee at CFPO 5053 (in Geilenkirchen , Germany) by whatever means and timing the military will deem appropriate .

= = Alternate uses = =

Postal codes can be correlated with databased information from censuses or health registries to

create a geographic profile of an area 's population . For instance , postal codes have been used to compare children 's risk of developing cancer and to describe a neighbourhood 's entrenched poverty (" Vancouver 's Downtown Eastside is Canada 's poorest postal code ") .

As Canadian electoral districts frequently follow postal code areas , citizens can identify their local elected representative using their postal code . Provincial and federal government websites offer an online " look @-@ up " feature based on postal codes . Although A1A 1A1 is sometimes displayed as a generic code for this purpose , it is actually a genuine postal code in use in the Lower Battery , St. John 's Harbour , Newfoundland . Another common " example " code in Canada Post materials , K1A 0B1 , is the valid code for the Canada Post office building in Ottawa .