

The National Anthem

There are differing accounts of the origin of "O Canada", but all agree that the anthem was written well after Confederation, that the French version of the words preceded the English, and that the music was composed by Calixa Lavallee in 1880. In that year, Dr. Theodore Robitaille, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, took the lead in urging Adolphe Routhier, President of the French Canadian National Convention, to write a poem to serve as a new national hymn. Lavallee was commissioned to compose an anthem.

The first English translation of words, by Dr. Thomas Richardson of Toronto, appeared in 1906. The three-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Quebec inspired many poets to produce verses for "O Canada" and one of these, by Robert Stanley Weir, became the accepted English text.

An official version was adopted for the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation in 1927, the playing of "O Canada" became so general that successive Prime Ministers saw no need to give the song formal recognition as a national anthem. Lester Pearson disagreed, and while he was in office, a parliamentary committee recommended the official adoption of "O Canada" as our national anthem with Routhier's and Weir's verses (with minor changes) for the words.

A revised version of "O Canada" was introduced in the House of Commons by former Secretary of State J. Hugh Faulkner on October 4, 1974 when it received first reading. No further action has been taken.

The new version, recommended in 1968 by a

special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, was first introduced in Parliament by the Secretary of State on February 28, 1972. After receiving second reading it was referred to the Standing committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. With the dissolution of Parliament on September 1, 1972, the Bill died on the Order Paper.

The new English version of the anthem reduces the repetition of the words "O Canada" and "stand on guard". Lyrics of the official English and French versions follows:

O Canada! Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command,
With glowing hearts, we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada! Terre de nos aieux,
Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux!
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée
It sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits,
Et ta valeur, de foi trempée.
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.

The Royal Anthem

By common usage, the Royal Anthem is God Save the Queen. It has never been legislated as an official anthem in Canada, or in Great Britain.

Henry Carey first sang the hymn in 1740, presenting it as his own composition. An identical melody, however, is contained in a 1696 composition by Purcell, and other similar melodies are known dating back to the 16th century.

The melody was popular for centuries in Germany and Denmark, where the tune was officially adopted as a national hymn by the governments of these two countries.

God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen.
Send her victorious
Happy and glorious
Long to reign over us.
God save the Queen.

(Information provided by the
Department of the Secretary of State)