

Activity and Expectations of the Canadian Duality Flag in 2008 and beyond

Year 2008 promised to be exceptional for the Canadian Duality Flag in its 14th year of promoting Canadian unity and linguistic duality by showing mutual respect for the French fact in Canada, as well as our two official languages.

It was the year that the city of Québec celebrated its 400th. anniversary as the French capital of North America and the birthplace of our great nation. Québec also co-hosted the first ever International Ice Hockey Federation championship in North America to coincide with this anniversary. Québec further hosted the Premiers' Council of the Federation in the summer and later in the fall, the Summit of the Francophonie attended by all French-speaking countries of the world. French Canada hosted the Canadian Grand Prix in June and the annual Grey Cup game in November. The following is a sequence of events from 2008 onwards.

The year started off early with Habs fever as they fought their way into the playoffs. The city was engulfed in red, white and blue symbolizing the heritage of the great French and English-speaking players who built the dynasty and revered legend of the Montreal Canadiens. The Canadian Duality Flag flew at the heart of the city's main crossroads.



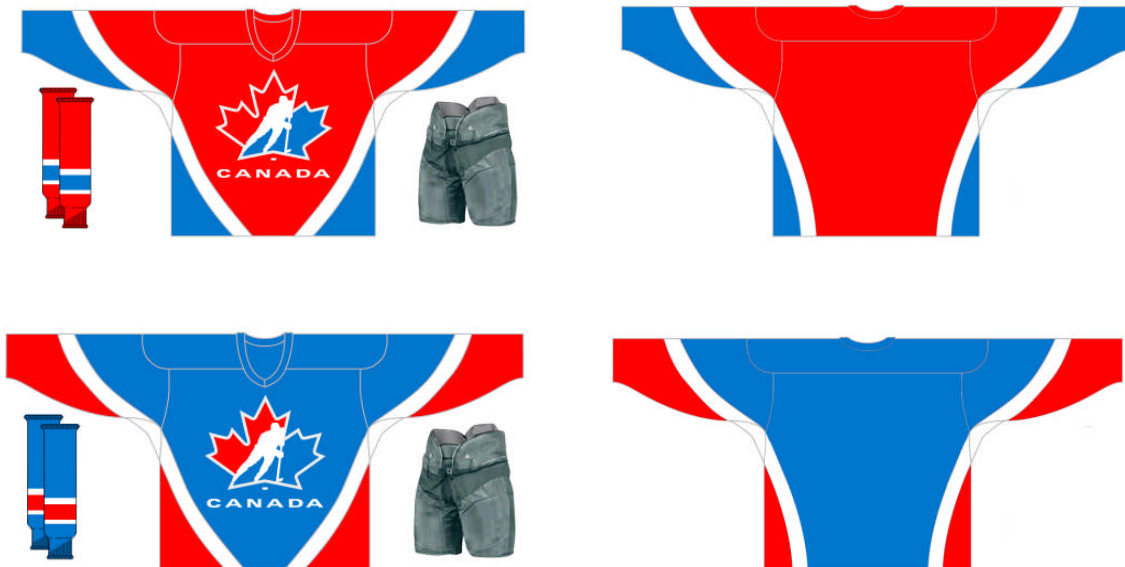
The Duality flag flew on Parliament Hill for February 26th.’s Federal Budget Speech by the Tory government in which the government was asked to consider the symbolism of the flag and the unifying effect it would have across Canada.

Next, in its 14th consecutive appearance in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade (184th.) in Montreal March 16th. the Duality Flag, representing our linguistic duality, was met with much enthusiasm. The message is one of conciliation rather than confrontation.

In the final event of the IIHF’s tournament at Québec’s Coliseum in May, a couple of Canadian flags were completely outnumbered by more than 20 Russian flags, just prior to the Canada-Russia championship game, Russian fans had been bused in from several cities. Then the Canadian Duality Flag appeared and completely outclassed the rest, flying 20 feet in the air with Russian fans trying their best to fly theirs higher. This war of flags lasted for a few hours outside the entrance to the Coliseum before the start of the hockey game, with the Duality flag the most prominent and beautiful. It was very heartening to see so many Québécois attending the game and rooting for Canada.

A major disappointment in 2008 was Hockey Canada's rigid attitude in refusing to dress Team Canada in 'red, white and blue' for this 400th anniversary year, instead of the 'red, white and black'. The 'red' and the 'blue' would have represented English and French Canada respectively and would have had a tremendous impact for mutual respect across the country. Instead Hockey Canada preferred to ignore our heritage blue and continued using 'meaningless black', or may we suggest, Nike black. It's ironic that a red, white and blue team won in Quebec City.

As a side note, TRCF has been requesting Hockey Canada to change the black in our uniform since 1996, recommending that red and blue should be worn on the crest and over the hearts of Team Canada. TRCF designed a red, white, and blue hockey uniform that was offered gratuitously to Hockey Canada in the year prior to the tournament. To be distinct from other countries, we suggested cold-steel (armour) hockey pants, which are classier with red and blue, than black. See our basic uniform, before decorative trim, below:



A major highlight occurred at the Canadian Grand Prix in June. Just prior to the race, the Snowbirds performed 2 fly-bys over the Gilles Villeneuve circuit. After the first pass, they looped around over the Old Port of Montreal, but after the second, they banked hard right near Victoria Bridge and headed straight for the Canadian Duality Flag which flew all alone high over the water of the St. Lawrence River near the entrance to the Grand Prix. What an awesome sight with the Snowbirds zeroing in and flying a few hundred feet directly above the flag.

The retouched photo of the Snowbirds is not sanctioned by the Canadian Armed Forces, however it is an awesome screensaver. It may be downloaded at: www.trcf.ca See below:



Next came Canada Day, where Duality Flags flew on Parliament Hill from 9:30AM to 11:00PM. The noon time ceremony is always special with the Prime Minister, the Governor-General and other dignitaries present to celebrate our national holiday. But it is the artists from all corners and cultures of the country, French, English and aboriginal, who really make it special. The Duality Flag was shown many times on the giant screens on the Hill during the day and was also seen during the closing comments on the CBC's noon-time national broadcast.

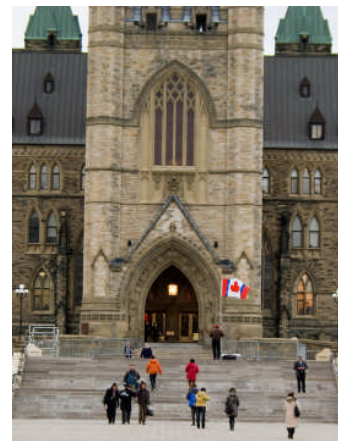
Two days later on July 3rd, the Duality Flag made a special trip to Quebec City for the official 400th. anniversary celebration which included Prime Minister Harper, Governor-General Jean, Québec Premier Charest, French President Filion and Grand Chief Max Gros-Louis of the Huron-Wendat nation, whose nation was honoured to play host for the ceremonies. A military parade followed featuring the militiamen of the 1600s to the present. The flag was shown on CBC's national coverage of the event.

Two weeks later on July 18th, the Canadian Duality Flag made another appearance in Québec for the Council of the Federation's meeting between the Premiers and their entourage of more than 200 legislators and guests. The flag flew at the foot of Samuel de Champlain's bronze statue and later, after mingling with the crowd, overlooked the photo session of the Premiers before they strolled down the narrow streets on their way to dine at the armoury. The streets were lined with hundreds of carolers cordoned off along one side of the street, with the general public on the other side. The beautiful singing filled the streets with a 'joie de vivre' that could not be experienced anywhere else in Canada. It was a wonderful occasion to show the rest of Canada the true values and beauty of the French language and culture. The Canadian Duality Flag walked alongside the Premiers and their entourage for a good part of the journey.

Following the call for a federal election by the minority Tory government, two Duality flags lined Elgin Street on October 1st for the Leaders' French language debate at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Hundreds of screaming supporters were in the streets awaiting the arrival of their party leaders. While they shouted offensive remarks to each other, nobody denounced the flag for its value and symbolism, most gave a 'thumbs up' for its recognition of our linguistic duality.

On October 18th, the Canadian Spirit Train, connecting Canadians to Vancouver 2010 Olympics, rolled into Montreal at the quays of the Old Port, with entertainers from across Canada. Highlighting the show was Colin James, the cool rocker from Vancouver, who did not disappoint the crowd. The Canadian Duality Flag sent a message of unity to Canadians aboard the train.

The following day Oct. 19th 2008, the Canadian Duality Flag once again went off to 'Québec' for the Summit of La Francophonie where Heads of State of French-speaking countries, from around the world, came to convene and celebrate its 400th. anniversary. Many parts of the city were 'off-limits' for security reasons. There was a special ceremony held at La Citadelle by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean for visiting heads of African states of the delegation. The Canadian Duality Flag toured the grounds of the Citadelle and the Plains of Abraham and finally ended up at the main entrance of the Citadelle. There, the huge 15 ft. flag was hoisted above the pedestrian entrance to the fortification until military officials asked that it be removed. Afterwards, a 6ft. Duality Flag flew brightly on the top grounds of the Citadelle, overlooking the Plains, for the remainder of the afternoon to the delight of many. The flag was even given a look-over by a security forces helicopter that flew around the city. The chopper stopped and hovered about 250 ft. above the flag, for a few minutes, then waved and continued on its way.



Remembrance Day Nov. 11 2008, was once again observed by the Canadian Duality Flag at the National Cenotaph, in Ottawa, for the 15th. consecutive year. As usual, the event was attended by Prime Minister Harper, Governor-General Michaëlle Jean, dignitaries and the hundreds of veterans who served for our country. Bless the men and women who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom, French and English alike.

On Nov. 18th, 2008, the Canadian Duality Flag was again on Parliament Hill for the Speech from the Throne to kick off the 40th. Parliament, following the federal election in which the Conservatives won another minority government.

With the Grey Cup game held in Montreal between the Calgary Stampeders and the Montreal Alouettes, on Nov. 23rd. 2008, the Canadian Duality Flag welcomed many out-of-town visitors around the Grey Cup Village on Saturday Nov. 22nd at Dominion Square. Of special interest was the Canadian Forces Exhibition along with the entertainment pavillions setup for the pre-game event. The Canadian Duality Flag also welcomed and drew the attention of many of the fans to the game at the Olympic Stadium, on Nov. 23rd. See photos below:



The Duality Flag sat out the last event of the year and didn't make an appearance on Dec 4th at Rideau Hall, when the Prime Minister asked the Governor-General to prorogue Parliament following the challenge of a vote of confidence by the three opposition parties.

By all accounts 2008 was the busiest year for the Canadian Duality Flag, and held the most promise for its recognition. Unfortunately though, this fell short due to indifference and lack of urgency by government and sports officials.

Nevertheless, the wind was not taken out of the Duality Flag which started strong for year 2009.

The prestigious NHL All-Star Game was held in Montreal on Jan. 25th 2009. The Canadian Duality Flag toured outside the Bell Center to the delight of many. The 'red and white with streak of blue' of the Canadian Duality Flag fit in perfectly with the 100th. anniversary of 'les glorieux: bleu-blanc-rouge' les Canadiens. Great Canadians of both French and English mother-tongues have contributed to the success of the greatest sports club in Canadian history. As the flag toured the numerous activities outdoors, nowhere was Canadian Duality Flag more relevant, showing mutual respect for French and English, than on the Plaza of Honour where bronze sculptures of the 'Greats' were erected by the Canadiens' Hockey Club: Howie Morentz, Rocket Richard, Jean Béliveau, and Guy Lafleur.

With the prorogued government set to return governing the country on Jan 26th 2009, the Governor General was again asked to deliver a new Speech from the Throne. The Canadian Duality Flag was present on the Hill to attend the ceremony. Unfortunately, the usual military parade and 'review of the guard' by the GG, was cancelled by Heritage Canada due to the extremely cold weather, however the Canadian Duality Flag weathered the cold and flew during the full event.

For our 15th consecutive appearance in the 185th St. Patrick's Day Parade, on March 22nd 2009, the Canadian Duality Flag was joined by a special addition to our group, our multicoloured 'Mascot'. He was an instant hit with the crowd of a hundred thousand people who came out to watch the parade. Many in the crowd had their pictures taken with our Mascot. Pictures of the parade may be found at: www.trcf.ca. See photos below:



Canadian Duality Flags once again celebrated Canada Day among thousands of people on July 1st 2009 on Parliament Hill. And once again the flags were shown full screen across the giant displays on the Hill. It was another wonderful noon-time show followed by an equally amazing night-time show prior to the fireworks, which unfortunately were not broadcast by our national television network, the CBC.

Year 2009 presents another great opportunity for the Canadian Duality Flag since it is the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act. To date, there has not been any announcement from the federal government, Heritage Canada, nor the Official Languages Office regarding any ceremony to commemorate the Act. Indifference by our elected officials is astonishing. Furthermore, neither has the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada ever symbolized our official languages during the past 40 years as well. The Canadian Duality Flag would address both these issues...mutual respect for the French fact in Canada and symbolizing our linguistic duality in our national colours also remembering that the Maple Leaf in the Duality flag stands for our great land, and notably the aboriginal people identity instills pride and pride builds nations it doesn't get any simpler than that.

Hank Gigandet
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PS...After inquiring at the Official Languages Office today, we were just informed that the OLO will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act on Sept 7. No details of the event are available at this time.....Aug 18, 2009.