

A Bank NOTE-able Canadian Woman

A backgrounder on the selection and public consultation process and the approach to Canada's next series of bank notes

Viola Desmond's portrait will be featured on Canada's next regularly circulating \$10 bank note. Desmond was selected by the Minister of Finance from a short list of five iconic Canadians who, together, illustrate the diverse and important contributions that women have made in shaping Canada's history. The announcement made on 8 December 2016 brings to a close the selection process that began with an open call for nominations and resulted in an initial qualifying list of 461 women submitted by Canadians.

About Viola Desmond (1914–1965)

Viola Desmond remains an icon of the human rights and freedoms movement in Canada. A successful Nova Scotia businesswoman, she defiantly refused to leave a whites-only area of a movie theatre in 1946 and was subsequently jailed, convicted and fined. Her court case was one of the first known legal challenges against racial segregation brought forth by a Black woman in Canada.

Thriving Entrepreneur

As a middle-class Black woman in the 1930s and 1940s, Viola Desmond was always a trailblazer. From her early days as a school teacher, her ambition was to set up her own hairdressing business. The first hurdle was training. Beauty schools in Halifax restricted Black women from admission, so she travelled to Montreal, New York and New Jersey to pursue various courses, eventually receiving a diploma from the renowned Apex College of Beauty Culture and Hairdressing in Atlantic City.

In 1937, Desmond set up Vi's Studio of Beauty Culture in Halifax, which became a gathering place for women in the community. But her vision didn't end there. Within a few years, she established the Desmond School of Beauty Culture, which drew students from across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec. Another venture—manufacturing and marketing Vi's Beauty Products—was also generating orders from across Nova Scotia. She had made positive inroads as both an entrepreneur and a role model in her community and was an inspiration to her clients and students alike.

Defender of Social Justice

On 8 November 1946, she was travelling to Sydney on business when her car broke down in New Glasgow. While waiting for repairs, she decided to go to a movie at the Roseland Theatre.

Unaware of the theatre's policy of restricting Black people to the upper balcony, Desmond handed the cashier her money and asked for "one down please." The cashier handed her a balcony ticket and, when she entered the theatre, the usher told her



Viola Desmond, ca. 1940.
Communications Nova Scotia

"Viola Desmond's own story reminds all of us that big change can start with moments of dignity and bravery. She represents courage, strength, and determination—qualities we should all aspire to every day."

Minister of Finance
Bill Morneau

that the ticket was for the balcony and that she would need to go upstairs. Thinking there had been a mistake, Desmond returned to the cashier and asked to exchange her ticket. The cashier refused, stating “I’m not permitted to sell downstairs tickets to you people.” As soon as she realized that she was being denied seating on the basis of race, Desmond courageously walked back inside and took a seat downstairs. The theatre manager then confronted her, and when she didn’t move, he called the police. Desmond was forcibly ejected, arrested, charged and then convicted for failure to pay the extra penny in theatre tax required for the downstairs seat.

Desmond was unsuccessful in her subsequent efforts to quash her criminal conviction, but her story resulted in a milestone human rights case in Canada. Since the case was framed as tax evasion, the real issue of racism had been shrouded by procedural technicalities. If she had not taken further action, the surviving trial records would have left no clue to the true significance of the case—that she had been denied the downstairs ticket on the basis of her race.

The legal challenge sparked by Desmond touched a nerve within the Black community and added to the growing consciousness regarding racial discrimination in Nova Scotia. Her case was an inspiration for change and part of a wider set of efforts toward racial equality across the country.

Desmond’s perseverance, and the attention generated by her case, paved the way for a broader movement to recognize the importance of human rights in Canada.

Desmond received a posthumous free pardon from the Nova Scotia government on 15 April 2010. It was granted by then-Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Mayann Francis, who was the first Black Nova Scotian and only the second Black person in Canada to hold this office. The free pardon was accompanied by a public declaration and apology from then-Premier Darrell Dexter, who indicated that charges should never have been laid and that her conviction was a miscarriage of justice.

Though the events at the Roseland Theatre are now 70 years behind us, Desmond’s struggle for social justice and her singular act of courage continue to resonate with Canadians.

Changes Coming with the Next Series of Bank Notes

The introduction of the Viola Desmond \$10 note, and the excitement that it has generated among Canadians, provides an opportune time to break from tradition and feature other prominent Canadians who have made their mark on the history of our country.

The next \$5 note will also feature a new portrait of a bank NOTE-able Canadian and supporting imagery. In due course, the Bank will launch another consultation process to seek input

What is the theme of this note?

The Bank will now begin to design this new \$10 note featuring the portrait of Viola Desmond. Through consultation with subject matter experts, the reverse side of the note will depict symbols and images that complement Desmond’s achievements and reflect the broader themes of social justice and the struggle for rights and freedoms.

What role did the Bank of Canada play in selecting Viola Desmond?

The Bank led the consultation process that began with an open call for nominations for iconic women who could appear on a bank note. This served to establish an initial list of eligible nominees.

An independent Advisory Council then reviewed the nominations and produced two lists:

- A long list of 12 names
- A short list of five names

To assist the Advisory Council in its decision making, a public opinion survey on the long list gauged the views of Canadians about the nominees, and focus groups later assessed the views of those short-listed.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada then consulted with the Minister of Finance on the short list.

The Minister made the final decision, in accordance with the *Bank of Canada Act*.

Why was the \$10 note chosen to feature Viola Desmond?

The \$10 note is more readily used by Canadians and exchanged more frequently than higher value notes. This makes the \$10 a good choice for featuring Viola Desmond.

from Canadians on the design of that \$5 note, building on the success of this most recent process.

This will be a few years in the making. The new \$10 note is expected in late 2018, and the new \$5 note will follow a few years after that. Soon enough, two new notable Canadians will be celebrated and recognized on the notes that we use in our day-to-day cash transactions. The subsequent notes (the \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes) will follow every few years.

As Viola Desmond will be featured on the \$10 note, and another iconic Canadian will be featured on the future \$5 note, Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and our first francophone Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, will be honoured on our higher value bank notes. This will take place when the higher value notes are redesigned for the next series. These changes mean that former prime ministers William Lyon Mackenzie King and Sir Robert Borden will no longer be portrayed on bank notes. The \$20 denomination will continue to feature the reigning monarch.

This design approach affords the opportunity to showcase and celebrate more great Canadians, while maintaining our proud historic roots. It aligns with a [national survey](#) which showed strong public support for removing portraits of former prime ministers in favour of other great Canadians.

For more information on the changes to portraits, please contact the Department of Finance.

Commitment to Consulting with Canadians

In 2014, the Bank reviewed its processes for selecting and designing the visual content of its polymer bank notes. This report recommended that, in the future, the Bank seek more input from a greater number of Canadians throughout the bank note design process.

The Bank held an online consultation inviting the public to comment on a set of [Principles for Bank Note Design](#). This consultation made it clear that the public is interested in what images appear on bank notes and how they reflect our country. In response, the Bank has committed to consult more openly and with a larger number of Canadians on the development of visual content for future bank notes (the theme, subject matter and/or images).

Will this \$10 note have the same security features as current notes?

It is too early to say what features will appear on the new \$10 note, but it will remain easy to verify and difficult to counterfeit.

Will portrait subjects change over time?

Prior to launching the consultation process around the choice of an iconic Canadian woman, the Bank gauged public opinion on the practice of featuring the portraits of former prime ministers on bank notes.

This was consistent with a commitment made by the Bank in October 2014 to consult with Canadians in order to determine their appetite for changes in established bank note design conventions.

A formal survey of 2,011 Canadians showed that 82 per cent of respondents agreed that other great Canadians, potentially from fields other than politics, should be featured on future bank notes.

Read the [executive summary](#) prepared by ACNielsen Company of Canada.

Read the full report prepared by ACNielsen Company of Canada [2016 Prime Ministers Survey](#).

As to whether portraits now change with each new series, these are decisions for the Minister of Finance, but it is too early to speak about plans for bank notes that are two series removed. For now, this design approach provides the opportunity to showcase and celebrate more great Canadians while maintaining our proud historic roots.

Will the next series be on polymer?

Yes. Polymer remains the best platform for the continuing development of security features for future Canadian bank notes, and the current series is performing very well.

Consultation Process for Canada's Bank NOTE-able Woman

In keeping with its design principles, the Bank sought input from more Canadians than ever before during the comprehensive consultation process to select an iconic Canadian woman to be featured on the first note in the next series.

This process was very well received and gave Canadians a voice in terms of who they would like to see represented on their bank notes. The work was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1:

An open call for nominations invited Canadians to contribute names of iconic Canadian women they felt deserved the recognition of being featured on a bank note. The process was launched by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on International Women's Day, 8 March 2016, and ended on 15 April 2016.

Nominees were required to meet the following basic criteria:

- They are a Canadian (by birth or naturalization) who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, achievement or distinction in any field, benefiting the people of Canada, or in the service of Canada.
- They have been deceased for at least 25 years.
- They are not a fictional character.

The Bank received more than 26,300 submissions from across Canada, resulting in [461 qualifying nominees](#).

If the Desmond note is dedicated to social justice and the struggle for rights and freedoms, what will the other notes depict?

As with the new \$10 note, the Bank will consult with Canadians on the visual content of the other denominations. We are not going to prejudge the process.

That said, Canadians told us, as part of their review of our [Principles for Bank Note Design](#), that it is important to celebrate the diversity of Canadian society, culture and achievements on our bank notes.

Moving forward, will Canada have gender parity on its bank notes?

The Minister will be taking gender parity and broader issues of diversity under strong consideration with respect to future decisions involving Canada's bank notes. The Minister will also give due consideration to the fact that Canada's first francophone Prime Minister will no longer be featured on the \$5 note.

For more information on this matter, please contact the Department of Finance.

Tell me more about the results of the open call for nominations?

26,300+ submissions received in 38 days
461 qualifying nominees

Respondents by gender:

- women – 65%
- men – 31%
- prefer not to answer – 4%

Respondents by age:

- 24 and under – 19%
- 25 to 34 – 13%
- 35 to 44 – 13%
- 45 to 55 – 16%
- 55+ – 36%
- prefer not to answer – 3%

Phase 2:

From the 461 qualifying nominees, an independent [Advisory Council](#) composed of eminent Canadian academic, sport, cultural and thought leaders determined [a long list of 12 nominees](#).

During their deliberations, the Advisory Council set four additional criteria when establishing the long list. The nominee should:

- have broken or overcome barriers
- be inspirational
- have made a significant change, and
- have left a lasting legacy

In addition, the Council developed operating principles that guided them as they finalized their recommendation of the long-listed women. They recognized that Canada is comprised of many different communities. The women who appear on the list should resonate with Canadians and reflect the diversity of Canada. Their achievements must be seen in the context of the time they lived.

A formal public opinion survey gauged the views of a representative sample of Canadians regarding the 12 long-listed nominees, and those results were shared with the Advisory Council. All 12 women received overall approval as candidates, with levels of support differing somewhat by age, gender and region.

The Long List

[Learn more](#) about the 12 women on the long list.

Survey on the Long List

A formal public opinion survey gauged the views of Canadians about the women on the long list.

Read the [executive summary](#) prepared by ACNielsen Company of Canada.

Read the full report [National Bank Note Public Consultation Online Survey Report](#).

Who selected these women?

[Learn more](#) about the seven members of the independent Advisory Council.

Why did you use an independent Advisory Council to develop the short list?

The Bank wanted an independent body to develop the short list of iconic Canadian women who could be featured on the first bank note of the next series. Their work combined with public input truly meant that Canadians helped to make this historic decision.

The Advisory Council was a key component of the comprehensive process designed to ensure that the woman chosen has a broad appeal to Canadians and is a strong reflection of the diversity, history, traditions and achievements of our country.

Will the same Advisory Council be called upon for other notes in the series?

The seven-member Advisory Council has completed its mandate for this selection process. It is still too early to speak about specific plans for the next notes in the series.

Phase 3:

Following a thorough review of the long list, the survey results and advice from historical experts, the Advisory Council established a draft [short list](#) of five iconic Canadian women.

Focus group testing was carried out to assess Canadians' opinions of the five women. Participants were highly supportive of the Bank's approach to this public consultation process, and no one woman consistently stood out in all five cities where focus groups took place.

At their final meeting, the Advisory Council reviewed five comprehensive biographies prepared by historical experts, as well as the focus group feedback. The Council confirmed their original short list and submitted it to the Bank.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada then consulted with the Minister of Finance on this short list. It is the Minister who makes the final decision on "the form and material" of any new bank note, in accordance with the *Bank of Canada Act*.

Commemorative Note for Canada's 150th Anniversary

In the near-term, Canada will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017 and the Bank will mark this special event by issuing a commemorative bank note. It will be a commemorative \$10 note that Canadians can use with confidence and pride. Further details about this note's design will be revealed in the lead-up to activities celebrating the 150th.

As this commemorative \$10 circulates in 2017, we will be developing the regularly-circulating Desmond \$10 note, expected in late 2018.

This document is available for download at www.bankofcanada.ca/banknoteable.

Further questions?

Contact Media Relations at 613-782-8782 or communications@bankofcanada.ca.

The Short List

[Learn more](#) about the five women on the short list.

Focus Groups on Short List

Ten focus groups were carried out in five cities across the country to assess Canadians' opinions of the five women.

Read the main [focus group findings](#) prepared by ACNielsen Company of Canada.

Read the full report [2016 Bank Note Public Consultation Focus Group Report](#).

Why are the Desmond note and the commemorative note for Canada's 150th both \$10s?

The \$10 selected for Canada 150 is a commemorative note, and will therefore be available in a limited quantity. It makes sense to follow this commemorative note with the issuance of a new regularly circulating \$10, expected in late 2018, featuring Viola Desmond. The \$10 is an excellent choice due to both its high visibility and accessibility to all Canadians.