



Bank of Canada Policy on the Reproduction of Bank Note Images

1. Counterfeiting is an offence

Section 449 of the *Criminal Code* provides that anyone who makes or begins to make counterfeit money is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.

Section 462(1) of the *Criminal Code* states that anything used or intended to be used to make counterfeit money belongs to Her Majesty. A peace officer may seize any machine, tool, instrument, or item that was used, intended to be used, or adapted, to make counterfeit money and forward it to the Minister of Finance for disposal.

2. The reproduction of bank note images is protected by criminal and civil laws

The Bank of Canada is the registered copyright owner of all design elements of Canadian bank notes, including the portraits, vignettes and numerals. Canadian criminal and public laws govern the reproduction of bank note images. A brief summary of these laws is set out below.

To avoid the risk of contravening the law, anyone wishing to reproduce a bank note image should contact the Bank for permission. The procedure for obtaining the Bank's permission is described in Section 3 of this document.

[Reproducing anything in the likeness of a current bank note is an offence under the *Criminal Code*](#)

Section 457 of the *Criminal Code* provides that anyone who makes, publishes, prints, executes, issues, distributes or circulates, including by electronic or computer-assisted means, anything in the likeness of a current bank note is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and a maximum fine of \$2,000.

No one shall be convicted of the above offence if the likeness of the Canadian bank note is

- i. printed;
- ii. less than 3/4 or greater than 1 1/2 times the length or width of the bank note; **and**
- iii. in black and white or only one-sided.

No one shall be convicted of the above offence if the likeness was produced with the permission of the Bank.

[Making bank note images that infringe the Bank's copyright is an offence under the Copyright Act in certain circumstances](#)

According to Section 42(1) of the Copyright Act, it is an offence to knowingly make for sale, sell, import for sale, or by way of trade, expose for sale, or exhibit a copy of a work that infringes copyright. Anyone who commits this crime is punishable on summary conviction and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and a maximum fine of \$25,000. If the Crown proceeds by indictment, the offender is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years and to a fine not exceeding \$1,000,000. On conviction, the court may order the destruction or delivery up of all infringing copies and all plates predominantly used for making infringing copies.

However, Section 3(1) of the Copyright Act provides that a copy of a bank note image will not infringe copyright if the Bank, the copyright owner, authorized its reproduction.

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Infringing copyright protection may lead to civil action by the Bank of Canada

Even in those cases where the reproduction of the bank note image is not an offence under the *Criminal Code* or the Copyright Act, the Bank is still entitled to enforce its copyright through civil action. Reproducing a bank note image without the Bank's permission may lead to civil action by the Bank for recovery of the infringing copies, as well as injunctions and the awarding of damages.

3. Obtaining the Bank's permission to reproduce bank note images

To avoid the risk of potential criminal and civil consequences, the Bank's written permission for the reproduction of bank note images must be obtained before the image is reproduced. The Bank will give permission only in writing.

Application procedure

Requests to produce bank note images must be submitted in writing to the Bank and must include:

- i. a description of the proposed reproduction and its purpose;
- ii. a description of the proposed placement and/or distribution of the material featuring the bank note image; and
- iii. the date by which the Bank's approval is requested. (Note: The Bank will make every effort to meet reasonable deadlines.)
- iv. a PDF of the proposed reproduction.

Exception

It is not necessary to request the Bank's permission to use bank note images for film or video purposes, provided that the images are intended to show a general indication of currency, and that there is no danger that the images could be misused.

The Bank's goals with respect to the reproduction of bank note images

Although the Bank is the copyright owner of the images used on Canadian bank notes, it recognizes that currency is an important symbol of value in Canada. Accordingly, people may wish to reproduce images for appropriate reasons. The Bank will ordinarily consent to such reproductions if

- i. there is no risk that the reproduced image could be mistaken for a genuine note or misused by counterfeiters; and
- ii. the proposed use does not tarnish the dignity and importance of currency to Canadians.

Conditions

To ensure that the above goals are met, the Bank will ordinarily impose conditions before it will permit the reproduction of bank note images. A list of conditions is provided here to illustrate the type of conditions that the Bank may impose. The list is not exhaustive and the Bank may impose additional conditions.

Examples of possible conditions that the Bank may impose on the reproduced image:

- i. smaller or larger than the length or width of a bank note;
- ii. in black and white or only one-sided;
- iii. marked with a visible reminder that the image is a copy that is reproduced with the permission of the Bank;
- iv. shown on a slant and not flat to the camera or naked eye;
- v. overprinted with the word SPECIMEN in lettering that is not less than one-third the size of the reproduction and which runs diagonally from the bottom left corner to the top right corner of the image if the image is shown flat to the camera;
- vi. coloured in a manner that is distinctly different from the main colours used on any current bank note;
- vii. in the case of the reproduction of part of a bank note, no more than 50 per cent of the total bank note image may be shown.

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Promotional coupons and vouchers

The Bank will not approve requests where the originator wishes to produce a promotional coupon or voucher that bears any likeness to a Canadian bank note. The Bank is concerned that these reproductions could be mistaken for genuine notes, and also believes that these coupons or vouchers diminish the importance of bank notes to Canadians.

Educational requests

The Bank will consider giving permission for the reproduction of bank note images that do not comply with the above conditions if the reproduction is for an educational, archival, museum, numismatic, or related purpose and there is no danger that the image could be misused.

Guidelines may be revoked at any time

The Bank may amend or revoke these guidelines at any time.

Further information

For further information, please contact the Bank of Canada at education@bankofcanada.ca or call toll-free at 1 888 513-8212.