

CANADA'S 2003 OLYMPIC SURPRISE STAMP AND ITS UNOFFICIAL FDCs

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On July 11, 2003, nine days after Canada was awarded the 21st Winter Olympic games, Canada Post issued a commemorative stamp (Scott 1991) to celebrate this major event in the life of our country. The Games were held in 2010 in Vancouver, British Columbia as well as the world-famous Whistler ski resort. To ensure that the stamp would be available in a timely fashion, Canada Post overprinted "Vancouver 2010" on its then current 48-cent definitive flag stamp (Scott 1931). This stamp—overprinted or definitive version—is only available in booklet format.

Normally overprinted stamps are already-issued stamps that go through the printing press again to receive an overprint. In this case, the timing was perfect as Canada Post was ordering a new printing of the self-adhesive booklet of 30 stamps for current use. Instead of the normal overprinting process—which was tried but proved unsuccessful—staff at Canada Post inserted the red inscription "Vancouver 2010" directly onto the printing plate to produce the new stamps. Purists might debate the validity of the term "overprint" for this stamp. However, if one looks at the stamp carefully it not only looks like an overprint, but no part of the design was removed to fit in the wording. In fact, the original design can be seen through the overprint. In addition, the same inscription was added three times to the booklet cover as the 30-stamp booklet (Scott 1991b) can be separated into three booklets of ten stamps for counter sales (Scott 1991a).

As these are definitive stamps, although with a commemorative bent, they could be reprinted should stocks of the flag booklets be insufficient. Another flag stamp was scheduled for the 49-cent domestic rate that took effect in January 2004. This would not be a first time this would happen: Canada Post reprinted the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee stamp of 2002 (Scott 1932) when it was required and committed to do

the same with the 2003 Coronation issue (Scott 1987).

A reprint of the Vancouver Olympics overprint stamp was unlikely for two reasons. The first was a Canada Post memorandum that accompanied the booklets shipped to post offices that was addressed to "all post offices in British Columbia and selected major post offices across the country". It read "Your outlet has been selected to receive an automatic allocation of the definitive flag stamps, available in a booklet of 10 or 30 stamps. The stamps and booklet cover are over-printed with "Vancouver 2010". This product is not available for reorder, as they are a limited quantity intended to commemorate the communities of Vancouver and Whistler being selected to host the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games". The second is that in the summer, and during the phase-out period of a rate, Canada Post substitutes stamps and booklets they have in stock when orders are received to diminish as far as possible the stock of the outgoing rate stamps.

Canada Post has a bar code identifier on each booklet of ten and calculates items in that way even if the illustration on the cover of the 30-stamp booklet spreads over the three booklets of ten. Therefore, the distribution for sale throughout the country is calculated in booklets of ten. Sixty per cent (180,000 booklets) of the printing of 300,000 "Vancouver 2010" 10-stamp booklets were distributed to British Columbia post offices while 113,000 were sent to major post offices throughout Canada. The remaining 7,000 booklets of ten were made available to collectors through Canada Post's National Philatelic Centre. At the time, Canada Post informed me that this is more than was needed to supply their account holders' request for booklets. There are many varieties in the booklet make-up, the stamp and its overprint which is beyond the scope of this article.

No official Canada Post FDC was prepared on July 11, and I am aware of no more than 100 privately prepared FDCs. Four individuals were able to make the FDC covers on the day of issue. These are illustrated with this article. Two were postmarked in Manitoba, one in Charleswood (Figure 1) and one in Winnipeg (Figure 2). The other two in Ontario, with the first postmarked in Hamilton (Figure 3) and the other at the Canada Post Headquarters post office in Ottawa (Figure 4). Quantities for each are not

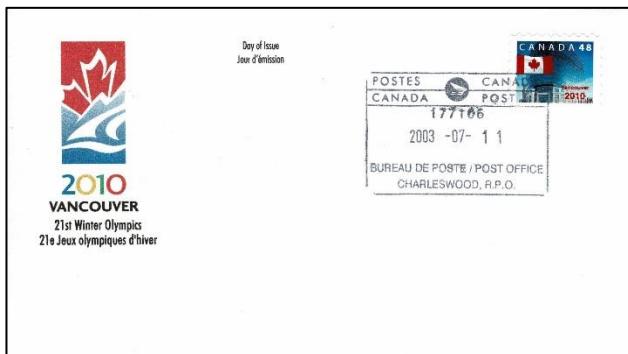


Figure 1

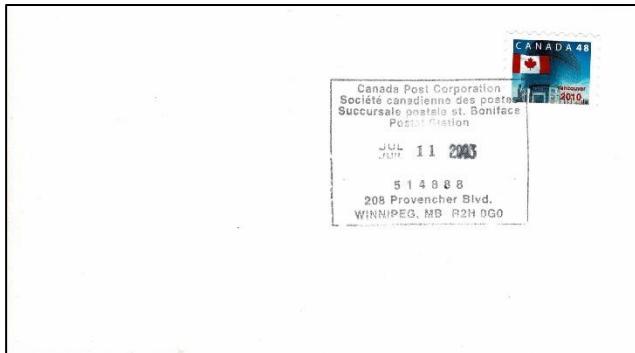


Figure 2

recorded except for the Ottawa FDCs of which there are 20.

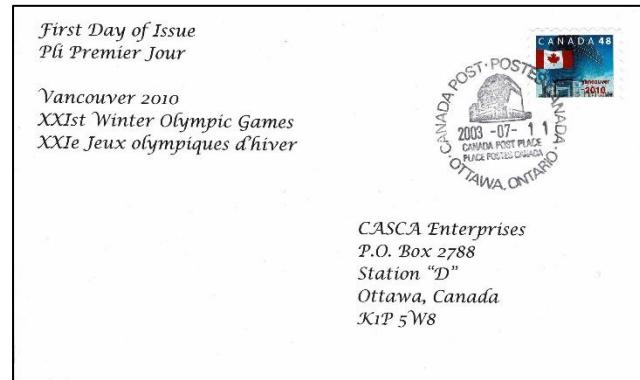


Figure 3

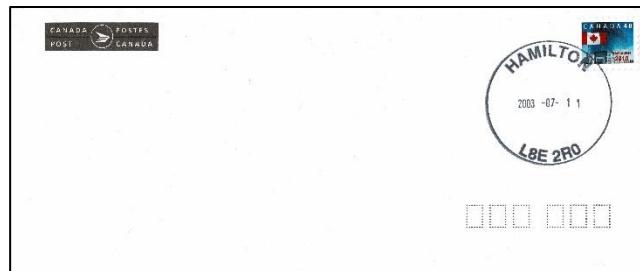


Figure 4