

The history of the Chief Warrant Officer Scroll (or Warrant as it is identified on the document) and why it is awarded to Chief Warrant Officers by the Minister of National Defence by virtue of the authority given to the Minister by the Governor General in Council.

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At present Warrant Officers (or Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officer 1st class in the navy) occupy a unique category in the Canadian Forces as non-commissioned members between the rank of commissioned officers and senior non-commissioned officers. The adoption of the present structure in 1968, when the Canadian Forces were unified into a single organization, led to some debate over who should receive a Warrant. Before looking at this debate in 1968, a brief history of the evolution of the Warrant is necessary.

Definitions: Warrant and Commission

The word ‘warrant’ was used during the medieval period, adopted from the French word ‘warant’ (a variation of guarant) and containing the idea, according to E. C. Russell, in *Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Forces*,(p. 63) “of an authority granted by one person to another to do something which he has not otherwise a right to do, not unlike a commission.”

Commissions, representing “the authority by which every officer acts in his post,” (Capt. George Smith, *Universal Military Dictionary*, London, Milan, 1779) have traditionally been granted by the sovereign or representative of the sovereign. In Canada the Governor General has had authority to grant commissions since (October 1947). An officer may be given only two commissions, the first upon commission (usually to a junior rank) and the second in the event of promotion to the rank of Brigadier General (or Commodore in the navy).

The Warrant of the Chief Warrant Officer, like the commission received by officers, conveys trust in the loyalty and ability of the individual. Granting a position of

authority as an experienced soldier with leadership capability over the men, the scroll (or Warrant) has symbolized for years the selection of the individual for the job - and has confirmed the granting of authority by the Colonel of the Regiment. (See Grose, *Military Antiquities*, vol. 1, p. 316 and Gordon, *Military Origins*, p. 249).

Granting of Warrants and Commissions in the British and Canadian Armies (& Air Forces) to 1968

In the British Army commissions were issued to officers by the King (or Queen) from as far back as James II in 1685, who commissioned two major generals and five brigadiers. The sovereigns commissioned members of the aristocracy to raise armies. Until the 18th Century only aristocrats were considered to possess the honour, courage and loyalty necessary to be officers. As promotion was by purchase (until 1871), aristocrats also had the money required. The *Officer's Commission Act* of 1862 specified in legal form the custom of commissions, and added that the signature of the Queen was no longer required and that the Commander in Chief's authorization, with that of the Queen's representative, would be sufficient. In Canada, the *Militia Act* of 1886 also detailed the role of commissions, while the current procedures are specified in Section 20 (1) of the *National Defence Act*.

Granting of Warrants and Commissions in the British and Canadian Navies to 1968

The general principles involving commissions and warrants applied to the navy, but the evolution was somewhat different. According to Lt.(N) Graeme Arbuckle, "the 'warrant' or 'executive' officers (the old 'ship officers'), ran the ship before the advent of the 'fighting officers,' after which they held less responsible positions. Yet these men, although not of 'commission rank, never quite lost their claim to being 'executives'." After 1746 the order of command became: Captain, Lieutenants, Master, Second Master, Bo's'n, Gunner, Carpenter. Arbuckle explains that "the old warrant executives were the Master, the Bo's'n, the Gunner and the Carpenter" and these standing officers (not commissioned) were responsible for 'licking the crew into shape.' By 1808 the regulations identified these 'inferior departmental officers' as Petty Officers and over the next century, as ships evolved from the age of sail, many of the former Warrant Officer

positions declined in importance. By the time of the establishment of the RCN in 1910, with the same rank structure as the RN, “the Chief Bo’s’n, Chief Gunner and Chief Carpenter (the only officers in this category) were commissioned. The later officially became ‘commissioned officers,’ and bore the title ‘Commissioned Gunner,’ etc. In 1949, the remaining Warrant Officers were commissioned...”(G. Arbuckle, *Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Navy*, Halifax: Nimbus, 1984, pp. 111-15).

Granting of Warrants and Commissions in the Canadian Armed Forces after 1968

Warrants had been awarded to commissioned Warrant Officers of the RCN until that position was abolished in 1949 while the Army and RCAF had presented Warrants to those reaching the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 until the practice was discontinued on 31 January 1968 with unification. At the time of unification the ranks of Warrant Officer Class 1 and 2 became Chief Warrant Officer and Master Warrant Officer respectively (Chief Petty Officer 1st and 2nd class in HMC ships). At the same time the ranks of Quartermaster Sergeant, Staff Sergeant and Flight Sergeant became Warrant Officer (Petty Officer First Class in HMC ships) (Russell, p. 63). Thus the number of personnel identified as a variation of “Warrant Officer” was greatly increased and this caused concern when the question was raised of reinstating the scroll.

Commodore R.H. Falls, in a memorandum of 13 November 1969, noted that the new Chief of the Defence Staff, General Allard had “expressed the view that all Warrant Officers in the Canadian Forces should be accorded a special recognition of status.” (R.H. Falls memo, P 5130-8, DPI, 13 November 1969, DHH, HF-D-2-3)(From Minutes of CDS Meeting 1/67 of 24 January 1967). Falls noted that this decision had been taken before the term ‘Warrant Officer’ included so many former ranks and specified the problems that could be caused: “by including all Warrant levels for a Warrant would result in such a proliferation of these documents as to make them almost meaningless as a status symbol. This statement has more impact when it is noted that on 1 Oct. 1969 of a total strength for men of 79,864, there were 1,027 CWOs’, 2,789 MWOs’ and 5,247 WOs’ – 11% (9,063) of the men in the Regular Force would be entitled to a Warrant Scroll. To these must be added members of the RESERVES which as of June, 1969 numbered 214 CWOs’, 665 MWOs’ and 1,258 WOs’ – a total of 2,137.” Falls added that

the intention seems to have been to include MWOs, but not all WOs. Shortly after, the decision was made to award the Warrants only to CWOs because, according to R.H. Hunt of the Directorate of Policy Implementation, “it is considered that issuance of Warrants to all men of Warrant Officer rank, of both the Regular and Reserve Forces, would decrease the value of the document and diminish the prestige traditionally associated with its possession.” (Memo by R. H. Hunt, CAIT, Acting DPI/RR, 23 June 1969 – in DHH-HF D-2-3). Both Hunt and the Director of DPI mentioned that the introduction of the new Warrant was a personal initiative of General Allard (A.L. MacDonald, Colonel, Director of Policy Implementation, memo of 30 March 1969).

Hunt and others referred to the traditional prestige of the Warrant as “a special form of recognition.” Brigadier-General D.C. Laubman, Director General Postings and Careers, informed all commanding officers that **“the Warrant Officer scrolls are in recognition of the unique status of our Warrant Officers and a tangible symbol of the special trust and confidence placed upon them by the Government of Canada and the Chief of Defence Staff ...”** (D.C. Laubman, Brigadier General, Director General Postings and Careers, memo to Commanding Officers, 4 June 1969, in DHH HF, D-2-3).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the special prestige associated with the warrant had been recognized for some time before 1968, unofficially. Consequently, as Hunt noted, pre-unification era “Queen’s Regulations and Orders of CFAOs make no mention of Warrants, thereby allowing much freedom of decision without a resultant amendment to current regulations and orders.”