



Fort Smith, Northwest Territories

Population Rank: Canada . . . 1,183
Territory . . . 4

Proportions: 1:2

Adopted: Unknown



DESIGN: The flag of the Town of Fort Smith has a field of green with the town's coat of arms at the fly end, three-fourths the height of the flag. **TOWN OF FORT SMITH**, in black serified letters, appears to the left of the coat of arms in the lower half of the flag. The simple shield has a horizontal top and simple sides curving down to a point. It has a white field divided vertically by a wavy light blue stripe. In the base, surmounting the stripe, is a brown palisades fort gateway; atop it is a pair of red wings extending upward in a "V". Within the open gates is a green trail (on it some designs show an inscription, **60° N**, in black). At the top of the shield, on either side of the stripe, is a small image of a wood buffalo (*Bison bison athabasca*) standing between two evergreen trees twice its height, all on green mounds. Above the shield is a large wood buffalo matching those on the shield, standing on a green mound on a torse of white and green. The buffaloes on and above the shield are depicted in brown, black, and white, and stand facing the left. Below the shield is a scroll in white with black details, inscribed **PERSEVERANCE** in blue antique letters.

SYMBOLISM: The three bison refer to Wood Buffalo National Park, an area larger than Switzerland which straddles the border between Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Established in 1922 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is home to the world's largest free-roaming buffalo herd with over 5,000 bison. The fort symbolizes Fort Smith, was named in honour of Donald Alexander Smith, Lord Strathcona, a Hudson's Bay Company governor. HBC established Fort Smith here in 1874 in the former homeland of the Slavey Dene, a First Nations people. "Perseverance", the motto on Smith's arms, was adopted for the town by its council in May 1969. "60° N" indicates the town's latitude, which forms the border between Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The wavy line symbolizes the Slave River, on which Fort Smith is situated. In the local Chipewyan language, Fort Smith was called *Thebacha*, meaning "beside the rapids". The river was an important transportation link between southern Canada and the valley of the Mackenzie River, and was the reason for the town's founding. The wings commemorate the role bush pilots played in the development of this area. They transported goods and people throughout the North and maintained contact between isolated villages and the outside world.

HOW SELECTED: Unknown. The arms were designed at the request of the town council.

DESIGNER: Unknown. Professor A. L. C. Atkinson, an engineering professor at the University of Saskatchewan, designed the coat of arms.



OTHER FLAG: The Fort Smith civic flag displayed at the Northwest Territories Exhibition Hall at Vancouver's Expo '86 was a Canadian pale design of green-white-green, with the coat of arms in the centre, nearly the full height

of the flag. All such NWT/Nunavut civic flags were designed in 1985 at the initiative of heraldry enthusiast Michael Moore, then a deputy minister at the NWT Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA). The Fort Smith flag was likely modified temporarily to match the others, by Rob Butler, graphic artist at Inkit Graphics in Yellowknife, NWT.