

# CANADIAN COIN NEWS

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## Sentence in fake toonie case a 'slap on the wrist,' says coin expert

By James Risdon

A Quebec court's nine-month sentence to a man who imported and tried to introduce counterfeit toonies into Canada isn't harsh enough to dissuade others from committing these crimes, says counterfeit coins expert Mike Marshall.

"He's got previous convictions for counterfeiting. He's got previous convictions for passing bad paper, bad cheques. He was guilty of (several) crimes, each punishable by up to 14 years in jail. Even with this previous record, they gave him nine months in jail," says Marshall.

"He got a slap on the wrist."

Jean-Francois Généreux was charged on Nov. 6 last year under the *Criminal Code of Canada* and the *Customs Act* of buying, importing and possessing currency, and providing false information in a customs declaration.

The Quebec resident was charged after an investigation which started in January 2023 when Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers intercepted 12,049 fake toonies coming from China.

CBSA officers and police from the Sûreté du Québec searched Généreux's home in the Sorel-Tracy area of Quebec on Feb. 7, 2023 and found another 14,581 fake toonies and 91 US-\$50 bills.

That's a total of 26,530 counterfeit toonies.

The RCMP's national anticounterfeit bureau and the Royal Canadian Mint later determined all of the toonies and US-\$50 bills were counterfeit.

In court, Généreux pleaded guilty to two criminal charges and was sentenced in August this year to nine months in jail.

But that's not enough to deter others dealing in counterfeit coins, says Marshall.

The fake coins expert says the courts should have handed down something like a five-year jail term in this case and the federal government should then have held a press conference to show Canadians how to spot counterfeit toonies and explain that even possessing them is illegal.

"What they should have done is probably give him a punitive sentence but then the government of Canada and the penal systems would have had to do a press conference and show Canada: A) how to identify the counterfeit toonies, and; B) explain the law," says Marshall.

"They have to show it's not worth the risk."



The toonie on the left is genuine, while the one on the right is a counterfeit. (Photo supplied)

The *Criminal Code* clearly indicates in section 450 that the courts can hand down jail terms of up to 14 years for each count of:

- buying, receiving or offering to buy or receive counterfeit money,
- possessing counterfeit money, or;
- introducing counterfeit money into Canada.

“Buying, smuggling and possessing counterfeit currency harms Canada’s economy by encouraging the black market,” says Annie Beauséjour, the CBSA’s regional director general for Quebec. “Border services officers are very vigilant and all offenders are subject to sanctions and legal proceedings.”

According to the CBSA, Généreux imported the made-in-China fake toonies through FedEx and described them as metal badges on shipping documents to try to avoid detection. They were to be shipped to his equally-fake company, Quebec Cards.

The supplier who provided Généreux with those fake toonies appears to be the same one that was also behind the 15 counterfeit coins which showed up in Sault Ste. Marie in the spring of last year.

This batch of fake toonies features glaring discrepancies with the real coins.

Queen Elizabeth II’s nose on the fakes is too long and pointy. Above her head, there’s a maple leaf on the fake, a feature that doesn’t appear on the real toonie, and the fake also has the year 2012 curved around the outer rim of the coin whereas it is straight in the bonafide coins.

On the flip side featuring the polar bear, there’s a dollar sign where the number “2”, the dollar value of the coin, should be. There’s also the word “Canada” on the fake where the word “dollars” appears on the real toonie.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, though, even these poor imitations would probably be accepted as the real thing by the average Canadian.

“People aren’t going to notice that in their pocket change,” says Marshall.

The reason for all the discrepancies between the fake toonies Généreux bought and planned to introduce into the Canadian economy and the real coins is that the Chinese manufacturers who make them have no real interest in being counterfeiters. They just want to make a product that will sell to buyers.

“They make them as tokens or satirical pieces or novelty items. It’s the secondary sellers that have illicit thoughts and actions,” says Marshall. “The Chinese will make anything. I could send them a picture of you and they will put it on the back of a coin.”

Those in China who made these fake toonies deliberately introduced these discrepancies, which many might think are simply mistakes.

“They do blatant mistakes... By true definition of a counterfeit, it must pass as original,” says Marshall. “This will pass as original – but it’s arguable.”