

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA



## Fact Sheet No. 11 THE MACE

The Mace is a large, heavy, richly ornamental piece used in the Legislative Assembly.

### ***THE PURPOSE OF THE MACE***

The symbol of authority of the House, the Mace is carried each day into the Chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

When the Speaker takes the Chair at the beginning of each session, the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table. This signals that the House is in session. When the Mace is placed on two large supports at the foot of the Table, the House is in Committee.

At the end of each day, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace out of the chamber. This signifies the end of the day's business.

### ***ORIGINS***

Roots of the word 'mace' date back to medieval times, when by canonical law, bishops going to war were not allowed to carry swords. Instead, as a weapon, they carried a massue or masse. These terms originating in France, describe a type of wooden club with iron tips or spikes.

Use of the Mace in parliament began in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, Members of the House disliked its presence. They felt that the Mace trespassed on their rights, since the Sergeant-at-Arms by authority of the Speaker, used it to maintain order in the Chamber. Its connection to royal authority gone, the Mace of modern times represents the Speaker's power in the House.

### ***A RACE...FOR THE MACE***

\*Returning to London after a junket, a nineteenth century Commons took two special trains. The Mace traveled on one train, while the official with the key to the Mace cupboard rode the other. The official's train arrived an hour later than the one holding the Mace.

Already at the House, MPs were forced to wait for the tardy official to unlock the Mace before talks could begin.

\*On another occasion, during a particularly furious debate in 1626, the Sergeant-at-Arms tried to end the argument by walking off with the Mace. A fast moving member however, grabbed the Mace, locked the Commons door and pocketed the key.

### ***THE FIRST LEGISLATURE AND ITS MACE***

A soldier of the Wolseley Expedition carved the first Mace from the hub of a Red River cart wheel. He included in its design, the rose, thistle, harp and fleur-de-lys.

The Mace made its first formal appearance on March 15, 1871, at the first legislature, in the Home of A.G.B. Bannatyne. Fire destroyed this temporary home of the legislature in December of 1873, but the Mace was saved.

This original Mace, retired after 13 years of service, is now on display in the Speaker's Office in the Legislative Building.

### ***TODAY'S MACE***

The current Mace first appeared in 1884. It is about five feet in length, weighs more than 20 pounds and is made of gold-plated metals. The symbols of the first Mace remain, along with a crown: symbolizing the Monarch as head of state, four beavers: acknowledging the province's place as part of Canada, and an orb and cross: symbolizing the spiritual and religious aspects of Manitoba life.