



The Senate



Speaker's Parade

A tradition that evokes the history of Canada's Parliament, the Senate Speaker's Parade marks the opening of a Senate sitting. Before the sitting, bells ring throughout the Senate's hallways, calling senators to the work of the Chamber. As the bells ring, officials solemnly escort the Speaker and the ceremonial Senate Mace from the Speaker's offices into the Senate Chamber. The Mace, the symbol of the Senate's authority under the Crown, is placed on the Clerk's table. The Speaker ascends to his seat on the dais and officially opens the sitting with a prayer.

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Although the Speaker's Parade follows the ancient tradition of marking important occasions with a procession, its exact origins are unknown. Historians believe that it may have evolved from a religious procession in the early Westminster parliamentary system (the model upon which Canada's Parliament is based). Another possibility is that the Parade may once have been a military escort. This is signaled by the presence of the Mace — a ceremonial version of an ancient weapon.

Whatever its origins, the tradition of the Speaker's Parade has held fast in modern-day Canada.

Similar parades take place in most provincial and territorial legislatures, as well as in the House of Commons. At the Senate, the order of the procession is as follows: security officers, the Usher of the Black Rod, the Mace Bearer, the Speaker, two pages, the Clerk of the Senate and the procedural clerks serving the sitting.



*The Hon. Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate*

Beginning in the Speaker's offices in the east corridor, the procession usually arrives at the Chamber via the shortest route, through the east side of the Senate foyer. In 2006, Speaker Noël A. Kinsella instituted a longer route once a week. On these occasions, the procession includes the Speaker *pro tempore*

(who presides over the Senate when the Speaker is not available) directly behind the Speaker. The Parade passes through spectacular Confederation Hall, approaching the Chamber from the Rotunda, the heart of the Parliament Buildings. This gives visitors a better view of this solemn ritual and emphasizes the dignity and authority of the Senate and its Speaker.

