

THE MACE



Parliamentary Maces are now a symbol of the authority of the House. Centuries ago, the Mace was the personal weapon of the Sergeant-at-Arms, the King's attendant. During the 13th century, it gradually came to be seen as a badge of office and authority. In an age when most people could not read, the Sergeant-at-Arms could arrest individuals by showing the royal insignia on his Mace. By the 17th century, the Mace was almost entirely a ceremonial object, and its function influenced its form. The menacing hardware was replaced with a decorated orb or a bowl.

Today, the Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for the care and custody of the Mace, and carries it to lead the Speaker in the Speaker's Procession at the opening and closing of each day's sittings of the House. It must be present upon the Clerk's Table for the House to conduct its business.



Since British Columbia became a province of Canada in 1871, there have been three successive maces in the Legislative Assembly. The first was used from 1872 to 1897; it was made by Mr. C. Bunting in gilded, carved wood, with a carved crown and Grecian cross. The second mace was first used on February 10th, 1898 at the opening of the present Parliament Buildings and was made of brass by Winslow Brothers of Chicago.

The current Mace of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia was adopted in 1954. It was entirely handmade by Jefferies & Company, Victoria silversmiths, from native British Columbia silver, plated with 24 carat gold, weighing 11 pounds. The traditional design has a long shaft topped by a deep bowl surmounted by a representation of St. Edward's Crown and the Royal Cypher. The bowl bears the coats of arms of Canada and British Columbia, and four embossed scenes depicting the province's forestry, fishing, farming and mining industries. These scenes are similar to the paintings in the Upper Rotunda of the Parliament Buildings.