



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Information Sheet No. 2 The Mace



The Mace as a Parliamentary Symbol

The Mace was originally a weapon of war developed during the medieval period. Typically a mace had a wooden or metal shaft with a flange or ball on the end. The ball was often spiked. It was a potent weapon and could be used effectively against soldiers wearing chain mail or plate armour.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice describes how the Mace evolved from being a weapon, to a symbol of Royal Authority to a symbol of the House and the Speaker:

In the 12th century, the Sergeants-at-Arms of the King's Bodyguard were equipped with maces. These maces, stamped with the Royal Arms and carried by the Sergeants in the exercise of their powers of arrest without warrant, became recognized symbols of the King's authority. Maces were also carried by civic authorities.

Royal Sergeants-at-Arms began to be assigned to the Commons early in the 15th century. By the end of the 16th century, the Sergeant's mace had evolved from a weapon of war to an ornately embellished emblem of office. The Sergeant-at-Arms' power to arrest without warrant enabled the Commons to arrest or commit persons who offended them without having to resort to the ordinary courts of law. This penal jurisdiction is the basis of the concept of parliamentary privilege and, since the exercise of this privilege depended on the powers vested in the Royal Sergeant-at-Arms, the Mace—his emblem of office—was identified with the growing privileges of the Commons and became recognized as the symbol of the authority of the House and of the Speaker through the House.¹

¹ [*House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition 2017, Marc Bosc and André Gagnon, page 289*](#)

The Use of the Mace

The Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace into the Legislative Assembly Chamber at the start of each sitting day and places it in a cradle on the Clerk's Table. The Mace remains in the cradle whenever the Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, is presiding over the Assembly. When the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole the Mace rests on the lower brackets affixed to the front of the Table. The Mace's Crown always faces the government side of the House.

The Sergeant-at-Arms is the only person authorized to touch the Mace during proceedings. In 2002 a Canadian Member of Parliament (MP) grabbed the Mace in the House of Commons as a form of protest. The MP was found in contempt of Parliament and suspended from the House of Commons for a number of days. He was only allowed to return to his seat after standing at the Bar of the House and apologizing to the Speaker and all MPs.

Yukon's Mace

In 1964 the Yukon Territorial Council (now called the Legislative Assembly) agreed to establish a competition for the design of a Yukon Mace. The winning design would be chosen by a selection committee which included the Commissioner, two assistant commissioners and two members of the territorial council. The prize for the winning design was awarded in 1966 to Royal Canadian Mounted Police corporal Jim Ballantyne. The design having been approved, the Mace was crafted by Birks of Montreal in 1971-72 at a cost of approximately \$8300.

On February 11, 1972, the Hon. Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, announced that Yukon would receive its Mace. By that time the Senate, the House of Commons, all the provincial legislative assemblies and the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories had their own Mace.

On March 6, 1972 the Governor General of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Roland Michener presented the Mace to the Hon. Ronald Rivett, Speaker of the Yukon Territorial Council, as a gift from the people of Canada.

The Yukon's Mace is made of gold-plated sterling silver. A crown tops the head of the Mace. Queen Elizabeth II granted use of the Crown under Royal Authority. Beneath the Crown is a topographical cross section of Yukon. Shields representing the coats of arms of Canada and Yukon are on the head of the Mace. The Mace also features fireweed, Yukon's floral emblem; the figures of a miner, a trapper and a First Nations person; as well as etchings of Yukon scenery and other armorial bearings. The Mace weighs approximately five kilograms.

For more information please see the Legislative Assembly's website:

<https://yukonassembly.ca/>