
Unveiling the Green Carpet in the Saskatchewan Legislature

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, MLA

On October 10, 2012 the Speaker officially unveiled a new carpet in the Saskatchewan Legislative Chamber. The worn-out red carpet was replaced with a new green carpet in keeping with the original intent of the building's design. A formal ceremony was held with invitations to former Speakers, Premiers, Clerks, MLAs and sitting Members, schools and members of the public.



The Saskatchewan Legislature celebrated its 100th Anniversary on October 11, 2012. In conjunction with the Centennial, a decision, by the Board of Internal Economy, was made to replace the worn red carpet with green carpet. The green carpet would be in keeping with the architects' intended original design plans of 1908 and the recommendation of the 1978 All Party Committee.

The Building was constructed between 1908 and 1912 in the Beaux Arts style to a design by Edward and William Sutherland Maxwell of Montreal. The Maxwells supervised construction of the building by the Montreal company, P. Lyall & Sons. Lieutenant Governor Vaughn Scofield's grandfather built the dome.

Piles were drilled for the foundations during the autumn of 1908 and in 1909, the Governor General of Canada, Earl Grey, laid the cornerstone. In 1912, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, by then the serving Governor General, inaugurated the building.

It was anticipated that the Chamber carpet would be green to match the green marble pillars in the rotunda and the green marble trim that are in the Chamber today.

Parliamentary tradition dictates that a red carpet is

used only in the upper house of unelected members such as the Canadian Senate or British House of Lords. Blue or green carpet was assigned to the lower house of elected members.

Walter Scott, Saskatchewan's first Premier, preferred red and the red carpet was installed. The Saskatchewan Legislative Building was one of only two in Canada that featured a red carpet in the elected Members' Chamber.

The change to a green carpet was a historic event and appropriate as we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Legislative Building.

This decision to change the carpet colour was arrived at after a number of years of informal discussions by the Members of the Board of Internal Economy and individual legislators. All the usual political considerations were discussed. However, Members agreed that after 100 years it was appropriate to complete the Assembly's original design.

In December 2011, the Members of the Board of Internal Economy unanimously approved the purchase of new carpet and the colour would be green. To avoid any partisan considerations, the shade of green was put into the hands of our very able architect, Robert Wells. Mr. Wells and his staff did an excellent job in their selection of the colour for the new carpet.

Earlier this year, we had a group of 100 school children and chaperones in the Chamber for a presentation and questions. One young gentleman asked why the carpet was red. In the presence of both Premier Brad Wall and Opposition Leader, John Nilson, I explained why the Saskatchewan Legislative Chamber was red, and that since the red carpet was worn out, we were going to replace it with a green carpet.

Dan D'Autremont has represented Cannington in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan since 1991. He was elected as Speaker of the Assembly in December 2011.



Speaker Dan D'Autremont (l) and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, Greg Putz, at the Formal Ceremony marking the installation of the new green carpet in Saskatchewan

The question and answer were overheard by a member of the media. This generated a news story which was then carried by other media outlets, including interviews and TV video clips. It turned into a bigger story than anyone expected.

As Speaker, I was pleased that the public was interested in the carpet and, by extension, the Centennial of our Legislature. The Chamber is both the physical centre of the building and the central reason for the building. The creation of legislation by legislators is the driving force and purpose of our Legislative Building. It is in this Chamber that the laws of our province become reality and where budgets are approved and taxes levied. Other provincial buildings hold the people and processes which administer these

laws and financial procedures, but it all gets debated and approved in the Assembly by legislators on both sides of the Chamber.

As we enter the next 100 years, we pause and reflect upon the rich history and tradition that encompasses this majestic building and, most notably, the Legislative Chamber, and what it represents for the people of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is experiencing historic growth, both in population and in our economy. The grand opportunities that were envisioned by Walter Scott and the builders of our Legislative Building in 1912 continue today and remain the vision for the future of Saskatchewan people and our province.