

Know Your Mace

Alberta's first Legislature was caught off guard just before its first sitting: there was no Mace. Because nobody so much as suggested that a sitting could be held without it, Alexander Rutherford's Liberal government ordered the rush construction of one from Watson Brothers Jewelry of Calgary.

Watson Brothers hired Rufus E. Butterworth to create Alberta's first Mace, which he made entirely from scrap in only a few weeks' time. Its shaft was plumbing pipe and it is rumoured to have been mounted on a toilet tank float. Ornamental decorations around the orb were made from old shaving mug handles, bits of an old bedstead and other scraps of wood. A piece of red velvet and a coat of gold paint provided finishing touches.

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Alberta's new Mace was created in 1956.

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Remarkably, the makeshift Mace was used for 50 years. It was finally replaced on February 9, 1956, when the provincial employees' union presented a new Mace to the Legislative Assembly in honour of Alberta's 50th anniversary. Nevertheless, the first Mace came out of retirement to be carried into the Chamber on one day, March 15, 2006, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Assembly's first sitting.

Designed by Lawrence B. Blain of Edmonton and built by the silversmithing firm Joseph Fray Limited in Birmingham, England, the Mace is about three feet in length and contains 200 ounces, or 5,669 grams, of

sterling silver overlaid with gold. A figure of a beaver mounted on the traditional crown adorns the top of the Mace. Both the royal and the Canadian coats of arms are displayed on the orb. Sheaves of wheat, representing Alberta's prairies, and wild roses, the floral emblem of Alberta, are engraved alternately on the crown. The headband of the crown features seven gems and semiprecious stones, the names of which spell the word "Alberta": amethyst, lazurite, bloodstone, emerald, ruby, topaz and agate. Two bison heads are positioned just below the orb of the Mace, which features the coat of arms of Alberta, and the shaft is decorated with wild roses and capped with a sheaf of wheat.

Submitted by Rhonda Sorensen,
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Alberta's original Mace was made entirely from scrap materials.