

MANITOBA DAY, 2020

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Yesterday, May 12th, 2020 marked the 150th anniversary of the day The Manitoba Act received Royal Assent in the Canadian Parliament. This Act created the province of Manitoba, and accordingly May 12th has been designated as Manitoba Day. In honour of this historic occasion, as we have done for the past several years, our Sergeant-at-Arms carried our original Manitoba Mace in today's Speaker's Parade.

Carved from the wheel hub of a Red River cart by a soldier with the Wolseley Expedition in 1870, this Mace made its first formal appearance on March 15, 1871 at the first session of the first Manitoba Legislature, held in the home of A.G.B. Bannatyne in the Red River Settlement. The Bannatyne home was destroyed by fire in December 1873, but thankfully the Mace survived.

Incidentally, a commemorative copy of excerpts from the Votes and Proceedings from that first ever sitting day of our Assembly in 1871 has been provided to all Members.

After 13 years of service, our original Mace was retired in 1884 when our current Mace debuted. The original Mace has a permanent home on display outside of the Speaker's Office, coming out of retirement again for this celebration. This important historical artifact sits on the Table today as a tribute to the rich history of our province.

In addition to the original Mace, the Star Blanket cushion and the beautiful beaded Mace runner – gifted to us by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in 2010 – are also on display today to help celebrate Manitoba Day, and to honour Manitoba's Indigenous heritage.

These artifacts also serve as a reminder that this Assembly Chamber and Legislative Building are on Treaty One territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and the homeland of the Métis people.

I am pleased that we are able to include our original Mace in the celebration of Manitoba Day, and I hope this tradition continues.

On this historic 150th anniversary, I want to take a moment to relate some notable information to Members, and to all Manitobans.

Since March 1871, our Assembly has met during 169 Legislative sessions, for a total of 8,280 sitting days, including today.

Members may not be aware that from 1871 until 1876 Manitoba was governed by a bicameral legislature, consisting of an appointed Legislative Council of seven members and an elected Legislative Assembly of 24 Members. The Upper Chamber was short-lived however as it was abolished as a cost-saving measure at a Council meeting on February 4, 1876, in which Colin Inkster, the Council Speaker, cast the deciding vote in favour of abolition.

From 1871 to 1873 the Assembly met in a house owned by A.G.B. Bannatyne. Over the next ten years the Legislature met first in a courthouse, and then later in the old Law Courts Building.

The first Manitoba legislative building – that is, the first building solely purposed for this Legislature – held its inaugural sitting on March 13, 1884. The building was located on Kennedy Street south of Broadway, on the northeast corner of the current grounds. As Members know, the current legislative building held its first sitting on January 22, 1920, and we marked that 100th anniversary in March of this year.

Fourteen Clerks of the House, along with many Deputy Clerks and Clerk Assistants, expertly managed each of these sessions. Twenty Sergeants-at-Arms have carried one of our Maces into the five different rooms which have served as the Chamber for the Manitoba Assembly.

Further, in the last century 851 citizens, including only 65 women and one non-binary person, have served in this room as Members of the Legislative Assembly. Of those 851 MLAs, 30 have served as Speaker of the House and 22 as Premier.

As the 30th Speaker of this Assembly, I have the privilege of serving all Members and ensuring the proper functioning of the proceedings of this House. What happens in this Assembly matters to every citizen of this province, it always has and it always will.

I would encourage Members to reflect on the solemn responsibility we all share to serve our constituents, and recall that whatever heated debates we have here are part of a long legacy of service to the citizens of this Province.