

Legislative Building Restoration and Preservation

In June 2019, *The Legislative Building Centennial Restoration and Preservation Act* was passed in the Legislature.

The Bill established a process to guide the restoration, preservation and maintenance of the Legislative Building and its' associated infrastructure.

An advisory committee was established of which the Speaker is the Co-Chair. The advisory committee approves annual plans that specify the restoration and preservation projects that are undertaken each year.

The Speaker's Uniform

Another important tradition surrounding the Speaker is the "uniform." The tricorn hat and black robes serve as a constant reminder of the Speaker's special role. The Speaker is an elected member like any other MLA. However, the unique nature of the job sets the Speaker apart from their colleagues as do the robes and hat.



Manitoba Speakers' Gallery

In honour of the individuals who have held the Speaker's Office, a portrait of every Manitoba Speaker since 1871 hangs in the Manitoba Speakers' Gallery on the second floor of the Legislative Building.

The Mace

The Mace is a large, heavy and richly ornamental rod used in the Legislative Assembly. It is the symbol of the authority of the House. The Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace into the Chamber each day as part of the Speaker's Parade.

The Speaker's Parade happens every sitting day. It is led by the Sergeant-At-Arms carrying the Mace, followed by the Speaker, Clerks and Pages. When the procession enters the Chamber all Members rise while the Speaker proceeds to the Chair and the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table. At the end of each day, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace out of the Chamber, which means that the day's business is over.



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THE LEGISLATIVE
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Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

The Speaker is a key figure in the Legislative Assembly. They are the neutral, non-partisan Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly, the position of highest authority in the Legislative Assembly and represents the Legislature in all its powers and proceedings.

The Speaker is an MLA elected in a secret ballot by all Members of the Legislative Assembly to preside over legislative proceedings and ensure that the Assembly's established rules of behaviour, practices (written and unwritten) and procedures are followed during Legislative sessions.

It is the Speaker's duty to interpret these rules impartially, to maintain order and to defend the rights and privileges of Members including the right to freedom of speech.

The duties of the Speaker falls into three categories.



1. The Speaker as Presiding Officer

Balancing the right of the majority to conduct business with the right of the minority to be heard is one of the Speaker's most important responsibilities.

The Speaker presides over the sitting of the Assembly and enforces the rules, orders and conduct of business. The Speaker oversees debates in the Chamber and ensures that Members follow the rules and practices of the Legislative Assembly as they ask or answer questions, debate or vote. The key aspects of being Speaker are authority and impartiality. The Speaker does not take part in debates, ask or answer questions, and does not vote except to break a tie. The Speaker also defends the Legislative Assembly estimates in the Committee of Supply. All questions and statements during a formal sitting must be directed through the Speaker.

Under the direction of the Speaker, the Office of the Clerk provides the procedural and administrative machinery for the efficient conduct of the House and its committees and a range of services and facilities for Members and staff.

2. The Speaker as Administrator

The Speaker is the head of the Legislative Assembly and is responsible for its overall direction and management.

The Speaker is responsible for the daily administration of the Assembly – financial, administration, human resources, legal, procedural and informational – and is supported by a team overseen by an Executive Director of Administration and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker is the Chair of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission (LAMC), which approves and establishes administrative policies that govern Assembly offices, including human resource policies. It also oversees the approval of budgets and financial policies for Assembly offices, including the offices of the independent Officers of the Legislative Assembly.

3. The Speaker as Official Representative of the House

The Speaker acts as the official ambassador of the Legislative Assembly, meets with elected officials, Ambassadors, Consul Generals and Honourary Consul Generals from all over the world and represents the Manitoba Legislature at parliamentary gatherings in Canada and internationally.

Other Roles and Responsibilities

The Speaker oversees the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Education and Outreach Services, is the Honourary Chair of the Association of Former Manitoba MLAs and provides a supporting role to the Youth Parliament of Manitoba.

The Speaker is a member of a wide range of organizations, including:

- + The Society of Canadian Speakers;
- + The Manitoba Legislative Assembly Audit Committee;
- + The Manitoba Representative on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Canadian Regional Council;
- + The President of the Manitoba Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;
- + The Executive Committee of the (US/Canada) Midwestern Legislative Conference; and
- + The Canada/US Relations Committee of the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

Impartiality of the Chair

The Assembly must trust in the impartiality of the Speaker, or it cannot function. The Speaker is not responsible to the Executive Government and seeks to preserve the Assembly's independence from it. Members are entitled to expect the Speaker to remain neutral and treat all Members fairly. At the same time, a Speaker is entitled to expect support from all Members regardless of their party.

History

The name Speaker was first used long ago in England. The original job of the Speaker was to communicate information to the King or Queen on behalf of the House of Commons – the commoners. The Speaker presented petitions and grievances on behalf of these people.

If the King or Queen didn't like what the Speaker had to say, the Speaker could literally lose their head! For that reason, the job of Speaker has not always been a desirable one. No one wants to suffer for being the bearer of bad news. Today, out of respect for the days when people really had to be forced to take this job, a Speaker is taken to the Speaker's Chair the first time by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. The new Speaker will pretend to resist as they approach the Chair. This is because of tradition, not because the Speaker does not want the job.

The Speaker as MLA

The Speaker, when elected, does not stop being an MLA. That means that while remaining neutral and avoiding taking public positions on politically controversial matters before the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker must still continue to listen to the people of his or her constituency and to effectively represent their interests. The Speaker does this by making private recommendations to government and organizations on issues affecting their constituents. The Speaker however does not attend Caucus meetings.

Legislative Assembly Security

As custodian of the powers, privileges, rights and immunity of the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker is responsible for security for the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker and the Minister of Justice enter into an arrangement respecting the provision of security within the legislative precinct.