

The
Speaker
of the Senate



SENATE | SÉNAT
CANADA



THE Speaker

The Speaker of the Senate is one of Parliament's most important officials.

The Speaker presides over the Red Chamber, enforces the rules and ensures proceedings run smoothly.

In addition to serving as the public face of the Senate, the Speaker is part administrator and part diplomat, all the while retaining the ability to participate in debates like every other senator.

The position of Speaker was formalized in the *British North America Act* (later renamed the *Constitution Act, 1867*) — that created the Dominion of Canada. It gives the Governor General the power to appoint the Speaker, but — as is the case with many parliamentary appointments — the Governor General acts on the advice of the Prime Minister.



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Serving as Speaker is a privilege, and I find my role to be challenging, meaningful and constantly rewarding. Whether performing procedural, ceremonial or diplomatic functions, I strive daily to approach my duties with the passion and integrity that Canadians deserve.

George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate

THE HONOURABLE

George J. Furey, Q.C.

A distinguished educator and lawyer with deep roots in his community, the Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., is a native of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He is the 45th Speaker of the Senate of Canada and the first to hail from his province. He was named to the Senate on August 11, 1999, and was appointed Speaker on December 3, 2015.

Speaker Furey attended Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he earned Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees in 1970 and a Master of Education in 1976. During his career as an educator, he was a teacher with the Roman Catholic School Board in St. John's, supervising vice-principal with the Port-au-Port Roman Catholic School Board and supervising principal of the Placentia-St. Mary's Roman Catholic School Board.

After a successful career in education, he attended law school at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia and completed a Bachelor of Laws in 1983.

Speaker Furey was called to the Bar of the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1984 and was subsequently named a partner at the St. John's law firm of O'Brien, Furey & Hurley.

While in his second year of practising law, he successfully challenged the *Criminal Code* language on sexual assault and proved that with the advent of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, certain *Criminal Code* provisions were unconstitutional. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1996.

Speaker Furey is a widely respected community leader, giving his time to numerous voluntary groups, professional boards and provincial commissions, including the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Boy Scouts of Canada, the St. Clare's Mercy Hospital Ethics Committee and the Gonzaga High School Council.

Since joining the Senate, Speaker Furey has been involved in numerous Senate committees, including serving as chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

He has proudly served his fellow Canadians as a senator and has been especially committed to advancing the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in Parliament.

History



The office of the Speaker of the Senate is as old as Canada.

Since Canada's legislature was modelled after the British Parliament, so were the roles of its presiding officers.

In the Senate, the Speaker took on the more limited role of the United Kingdom's Lord Chancellor, who presided over the House of Lords – the British Parliament's upper house – until members of the Lords elected their first Lord Speaker in 2006.

Initially, the Speaker shepherded the Senate through the daily order of business and ensured that all senators had their chance to be heard, but in 1906 senators amended their own rules, giving the Speaker the power to maintain order and decorum in the Chamber.

Those changes gave the Speaker the ability to halt proceedings, to enforce the *Rules of the Senate* and to rule on points of order (in which a senator argues that a rule or customary procedure was not followed).

In 1991, the Speaker was granted the authority to suspend debate to restore order. Though the Speaker still possesses these powers, it has seldom been necessary to use them in debate.

The Speaker's term in office is not fixed, but it tends to be relatively short. With 45 Speakers of the Senate since Confederation, the average length of service is three years.

A solemn figure and a guardian of the institution, the Speaker represents tradition in the Senate. The Speaker is the only senator who still wears the traditional court garb of black robes, a tab collar and a tricorn hat.

Senators still nod or bow to the Speaker's chair when they enter or leave the room as a sign of respect. In addition, a sitting of the Senate may only begin when the Speaker enters the Chamber in the Speaker's Parade and reads the opening prayers.

◀ Queen Elizabeth II during the opening of the 23rd Parliament in 1957 in the Senate Chamber. Each new session begins with a Speech from the Throne. It starts only after the Speaker of the Senate asks the Usher of the Black Rod to invite representatives from the House of Commons to the Senate Chamber. The speech is most often read by the Monarch's representative in Canada, the Governor General.

FIRST SPEAKER

Hon. Joseph-Édouard
Cauchon, P.C.

18
67



Joseph-Édouard Cauchon, a prominent Quebec journalist and politician, served in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada before his appointment to the Senate on November 2, 1867. Three days later he was named Speaker, a role he filled until June 1872.

19
06

SPEAKER RECEIVES POWER TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND DECORUM



Muriel McQueen Fergusson, the first female Speaker of the Senate, shattered conventions early in her life. She was a law student in the 1910s and among the few women called to the New Brunswick bar in the 1920s. She became the first female probate court judge for Victoria County and in 1950, she was the first woman elected to Fredericton city council, later becoming deputy mayor.

Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent named her to the Senate in 1953, where she continued to break barriers. In 1971, she finally convinced the Senate to allow girls to become Senate pages. Then, in 1972, she was appointed Speaker of the Senate. It was another five years before the House of Commons would have its first woman in the Speaker's chair — Jeanne Sauv .

FIRST FEMALE SPEAKER

Hon. Muriel McQueen
Fergusson, P.C.

19
72

19
91

SPEAKER GRANTED AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND DEBATE



THE ROLES
OF THE
Speaker

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Presiding Officer



The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Senate – essentially the chair of its “sittings,” or meetings of all senators in the Red Chamber.

During the sitting, the Speaker directs the flow of legislative business by guiding senators through the daily agenda while maintaining order and decorum. The Speaker is also responsible for recognizing senators who wish to speak, reminding senators of their time limits during speeches and calling out the next item for consideration. As a procedural authority in the Chamber, the Speaker must be neutral and fair in ensuring that rules and practices are respected during proceedings.

The Speaker often rules on points of order – questions raised by senators as to whether the Senate’s correct procedure has been followed or a rule has been violated.

If the point of order is complex, the Speaker may take several days to deliberate before rendering a decision. The senators involved can appeal a ruling, and it can ultimately be put to a vote to be ratified or rejected. Given the Speaker’s duty to remain impartial, such appeals are, in fact, rare.

The Speaker also presides over important parliamentary ceremonies that take place in the Senate Chamber. Some of these events include the Speech from the Throne, which opens every session of Parliament, and Royal Assent, during which the Monarch or his designate – usually the Governor General – formally consents to the enactment of bills passed by both the Senate and the House of Commons.

Senator



Credit: Matthew Raske

Just like every other senator, the Speaker represents the people of his or her home province or territory and their interests.

It is relatively rare for the Speaker to participate in debates; it is customary to do so only if he or she feels strongly about the subject. In these cases, the Speaker will step down from the chair and take a regular Senate seat while the Speaker *pro tempore* presides.

The Speaker also has the right to take part in recorded divisions, or formal votes in the Senate; his vote has the same weight as that of any senator.

Unlike the Speaker of the House of Commons, who only votes to break a tie, the Speaker of the Senate may vote on any issue. His or her vote is counted first when a vote is held.

SPEAKER *PRO TEMPORE*

At the start of each parliamentary session, a senator is nominated by a selection committee to assume the role of Speaker *pro tempore*, or acting Speaker. The nomination is confirmed through a vote in the Senate. The Speaker *pro tempore* presides over a sitting in the absence of the Speaker or when the Speaker of the Senate wishes to participate in a debate.

THE *Speaker's* UNIFORM

The distinctive black uniform of the Speaker of the Senate is one of the most visible examples of the Canadian Parliament's deep roots in British tradition.

Dating back to the 18th century, this uniform evolved from the standard outfit worn by officers of the law courts of England.

It was adopted by senior officers of the British House of Lords and House of Commons due to their affiliation with the "High Court of Parliament." The essence of this traditional uniform is largely unchanged and is now part of the time-honoured custom of most parliaments in the nations that emerged from the British Empire.



WIG BAG

A symbolic "wig bag" hangs at the middle of the back over the robe. This ribboned square of black silk was originally used to hold the ends of a powdered wig, which was the style in Europe during the 18th century.

TRICORN HAT

The Speaker wears or carries a tricorn hat, a style popular among European men in the 18th century. In the Senate, only the Speaker is entitled to wear one.

ROBE

The most distinctive element of the Speaker's uniform is the black silk robe with a flat hood and "wings" that hang from the open elbow sleeves.

WHITE SHIRT

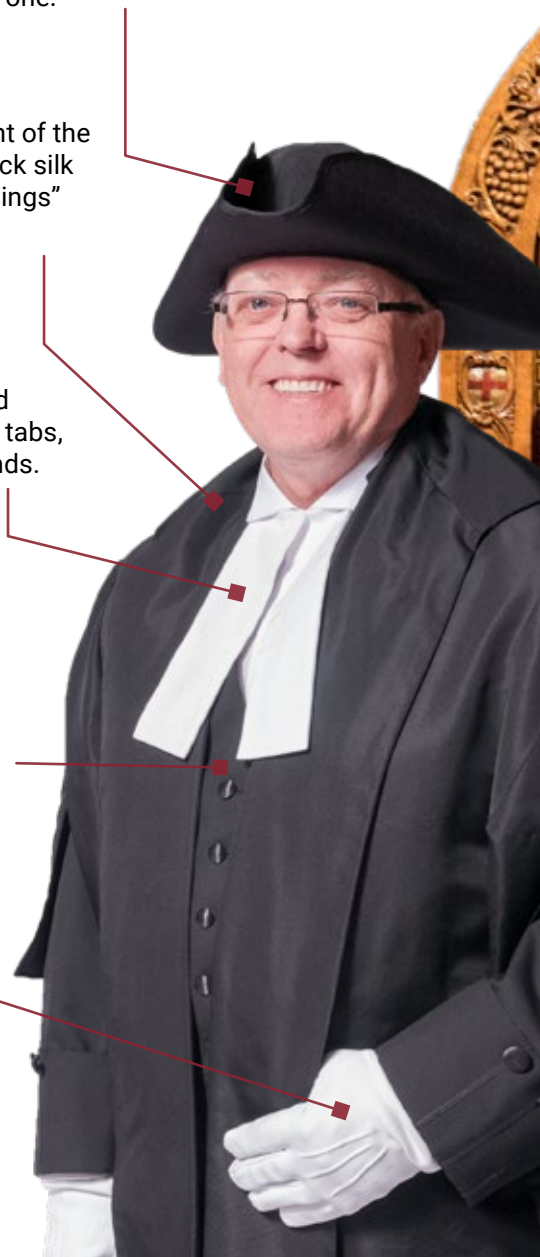
The white shirt has a winged collar around which are tied tabs, and two white, starched bands.

TAILCOAT

Underneath the robe is a black tailcoat with large cuffs and seven decorative buttons. Made of wool, the tailcoat is worn over a black vest and trousers trimmed with a narrow silk band.

COTTON GLOVES

For ceremonial occasions, like the Parade, the Speaker wears short, white cotton gloves.





THE *Speaker's* CHAIR

The Speaker's chair sits on a dais at the head of the Senate Chamber, near the thrones reserved for Canada's Monarch or the Governor General and consort.

The dais, chair and thrones are upholstered in deep red, the colour of royalty. This decor is why the Senate Chamber is often called the Red Chamber.

In the 19th century, it was the custom in the Senate to give the chair to the outgoing Speaker as a gift.

The current Speaker's chair was hand-carved in 1923 but had one small modification made: its height can be adjusted to accommodate a Speaker of any stature.

Symbols of the country's founding nations, including the three-leafed maple twig representing all Canadians, are carved into the chair's walnut wood.

THE *Speaker's* PARADE

As the bells ring, officials solemnly escort the Speaker and the ceremonial Mace into the Senate Chamber.

Clerk

Table
Officers

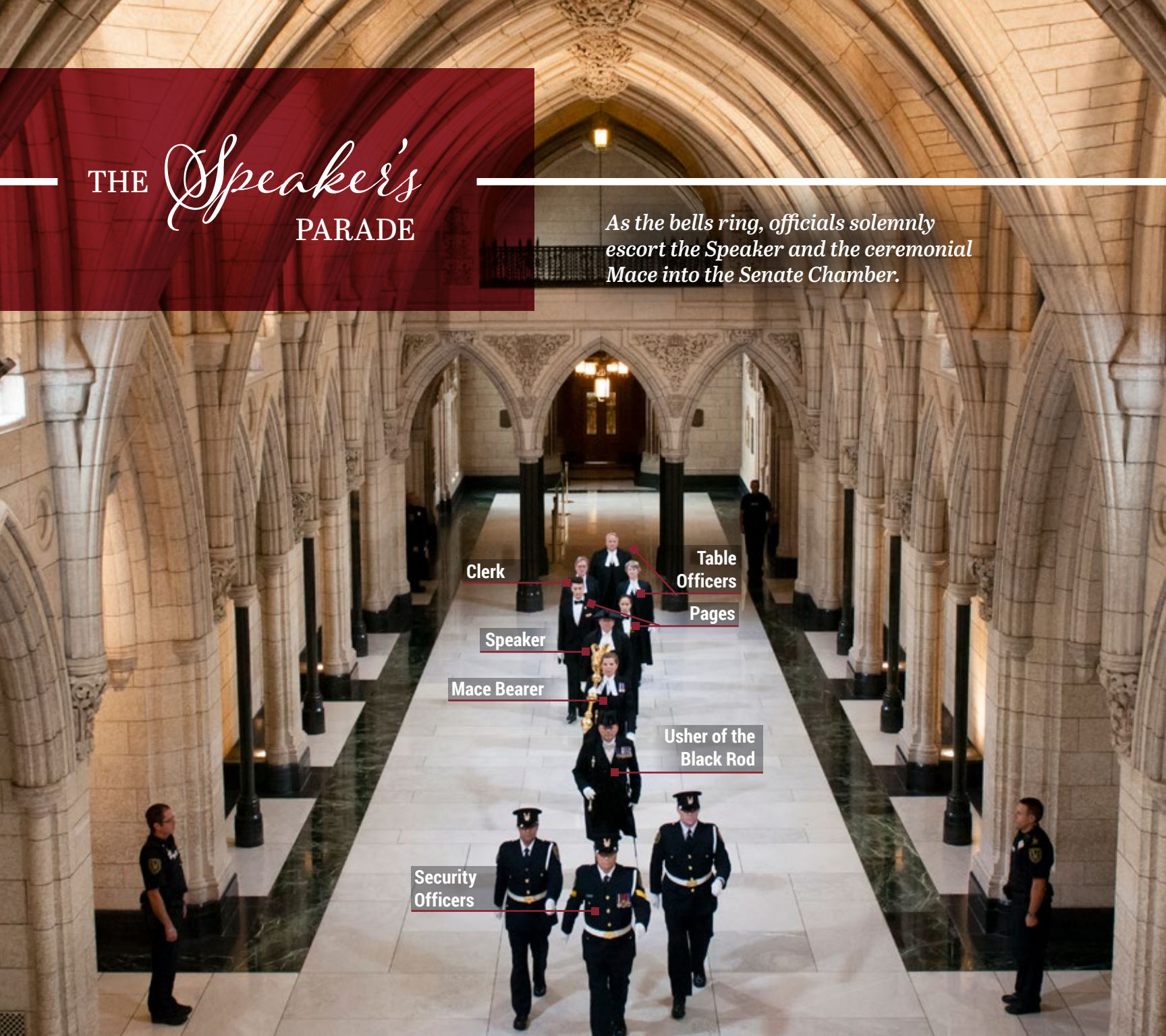
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Speaker

Mace Bearer

Usher of the
Black Rod

Security
Officers



The Senate Speaker's parade is a vibrant tradition linking the present to centuries of parliamentary democracy.

Every Senate sitting is heralded by the sound of a tolling bell, which occasions great bustle in the halls of Parliament. The bell's resonant clang summons all senators to their seats – and marks the beginning of the Speaker's parade.

The ceremonial procession begins at the Speaker's chambers, then works its way through the spectacular Confederation Hall (also called the rotunda) at the heart of the Parliament Buildings, before finally entering the Upper House.

The parade consists of many officials escorting the Speaker and the ceremonial Mace. At its head are security officers, followed by the Usher of the Black Rod, the Mace Bearer, the Speaker, two pages, the Clerk of the Senate and other table officers.

Senators and observers remain standing as the Speaker ascends the dais and opens the sitting with prayers. The Mace – the symbol of the Senate's authority under the Crown – is then placed on the Clerk's table.

The precise origins of the Speaker's parade are lost to history. Some historians believe it evolved from a religious procession in the early Westminster parliamentary system in England, the model upon which Canada's Parliament is based.

The parade may instead have its roots in a military escort, an interpretation suggested by the presence of the Mace – a ceremonial version of an ancient weapon.

Whatever its origins, this solemn ritual connects the modern Senate with a proud and dignified past.

THE *Speaker's*
CHAMBERS





When the Speaker is not presiding over sittings of the Senate or representing Parliament at home and abroad, his chambers are the hub of his professional activity. This is where he reviews legislation, prepares speeches and meets with fellow parliamentarians and diplomats.

The Speaker's chambers have long served as a stately setting for conducting parliamentary business. They echo the deliberations of men and women who served as guiding forces throughout a century and a half of Canada's history.

Inscribed in prominent places throughout these rooms are Latin phrases drawn from the works of the renowned Roman authors Cicero, Horace, Livy, Seneca and Tacitus. Speaking of wisdom, order, prudence, balance and caution, their sage advice has certainly stood the test of time.



As a space reserved for the presiding officer of the Upper House, the Speaker's suite has its own distinct character within the Centre Block. Its designers modelled it on a 16th century English Tudor great hall.

It was designed to serve both as a formal reception area for the Monarch, the Governor General and other dignitaries while on Parliament Hill, and as a working office for the Speaker.

◀ *Speaker Furey in his office with his wife Karen and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales during the Canada 150 celebrations.*

Diplomat



The Speaker plays an integral role on the world stage in strengthening relations between Canada and other countries.

As a diplomatic figure, the Speaker ranks fourth in the Table of Precedence for Canada, after the Governor General, the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Speaker is frequently called on by Canada to host and greet foreign leaders and delegations when they visit Parliament Hill.

He also maintains a crucial link with diplomats and other foreign dignitaries, often meeting with them during courtesy calls in Ottawa.

In addition, the Speaker leads parliamentary delegations outside of Canada, helping to promote dialogue with other nations and their legislatures.

At home and abroad, the Speaker acts as an ambassador for Canada's system of government, speaking regularly about Canada's parliamentary process and the vital role played by the Senate.



Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, a fearless advocate for women and girls, who survived an attempt on her life at age 15, addresses a joint session of Parliament in April 2017 as Speaker George J. Furey looks on. The speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons jointly preside over proceedings of this nature, which generally take place in the House of Commons.

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Senators work hard on behalf of all Canadians, and it is truly humbling to observe and assist them from the Speaker's chair. I look forward with confidence to what the future holds for the Senate of Canada.


George J. Furey, Q.C.,
Speaker of the Senate



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Speaker's
ACTIVITIES

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