

# Alberta Legislature Building Guide

## Visiting the Legislature: Instructions

- Legislature tours are free, and are approximately 45 minutes long. Visitors must remain with a Heritage Interpreter at all times during tours.
- If visitors do not wish to take a guided tour, they may explore the main floor Rotunda ONLY and cannot go to other floors, down hallways or behind the Grand Staircase. To visit the Legislature Library or cafeteria, visitors should ask a Heritage Interpreter for more information.
- Photography is allowed (except for commercial use). Food and drink are not permitted in the building.
- The Legislative Assembly Visitor Centre is located in the Edmonton Federal Building. Explore the Agora Interpretive Centre, the Capital Gifts store and the Pehonan Theatre, which offers a free, 4-D movie throughout the day.

## Legislature Building

- When Alberta became a province in 1905, Edmonton was designated as the capital city. The Legislature Building is where the democratically elected representatives of the people of Alberta meet to pass laws, approve the spending of money, and discuss policies that matter to all Albertans.
- After Alberta became a province, plans began for the construction of the Legislature Building. The building was designed in a style called Beaux Arts, which was popular during the first part of the 20th century, and is a style that was used for a number of legislature buildings built around the same time in Canada and the United States.
- Construction of the Legislature began in 1907. The building was officially opened on September 3, 1912.
- The Legislature is situated on Treaty 6 land. This site was a traditional meeting place of the Plains Cree peoples. The final Fort Edmonton stood on the land directly south of the Legislature from 1830 to 1915.
- The Legislature continues to be an important meeting place for Albertans. Albertans are encouraged to watch their representatives in the Chamber. Many ceremonies and celebrations take place inside the Legislature and on the grounds.

## Second Floor (Main Floor)

### The Rotunda

- The design of the Rotunda, with marble and large columns, is reminiscent of architecture from ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy.
- The Rolls of Honour list the names of provincial public servants who fought during the First and Second World Wars. Memorial plaques list those who gave their lives in battle. The Regimental Colours (flags) circling the Rotunda represent Alberta's military units that served in Canada's wars.
- The statue on the northwest side of the Rotunda is of Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria, and the namesake of the province.
- The statue on the northeast side of the Rotunda is of Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot. Crowfoot played a significant role in Alberta's history as a strong Indigenous leader and one of the signatories of Treaty 7.
- The fountain was built in 1959 to commemorate an official visit of Queen Elizabeth II, Canada's Queen and head of the Commonwealth.
- The Legislature Library (behind the Grand Staircase) was established in 1906. The Library provides service to the Members of the Legislative Assembly and is also open to the public.

## Third Floor

### Chamber Doors

- The Chamber is the room where all elected Members gather to debate bills and policy on behalf of Albertans.
- The main doors to the Legislative Assembly Chamber are located at the top of the Grand Staircase. The doors were hand-carved from solid red mahogany wood from Belize.
- The mahogany wood carving of Alberta's coat of arms took Korean-Canadian artist Mr. Chan Chung about 500 hours to complete.

## Portraits of Alberta's Premiers

- Along the northeast wall are portraits of Alberta's former Premiers. After a general election, the leader of the political party with the most Members elected typically becomes Premier.
- Once a Premier's term in office has ended, he or she is commemorated with a portrait. The Premier chooses the artist and style of the painting.

## Portraits of Alberta's Lieutenant Governors

- Along the northwest wall are the portraits of Alberta's former Lieutenant Governors. The Lieutenant Governor is the Queen's representative in Alberta, and he or she grants Royal Assent to bills passed by the Legislative Assembly. When a bill is given Royal Assent, it becomes law.

## The Mace Case

- The Mace is the symbol of the Legislative Assembly's authority to make laws. The Mace is carried into the Chamber each day that the Assembly sits, and is placed on a rest with the crown pointed towards the Government.
- Alberta's original Mace was made quickly out of recycled materials for the initial meeting of the first Legislature. Although it was intended to be temporary, it was used for 50 years.
- Alberta's current Mace was presented in 1956 and is made of 5.7 kilograms of silver overlaid with gold and hand-etched with wild roses and other Alberta emblems.
- The Black Rod is used by the Sergeant-at-Arms when escorting the Lieutenant Governor into the Chamber. The Black Rod symbolizes the separation between the Crown and the elected Members.

## Fourth Floor

- Portraits of King George V and Queen Mary hang on the south wall. King George V was the reigning monarch when the Legislature Building officially opened in 1912.
- The north wall features portraits of past Speakers of the Assembly. The west wall features portraits of Lieutenant Governors of the North-West Territories. Alberta was a district of the North-West Territories before becoming a province in 1905.

## The Legislative Chamber

- Visitors to the Legislature are invited to view the proceedings from the galleries overlooking the Chamber floor.
- The Speaker's chair and canopy are located at the south end of the Chamber. The Speaker presides over the debate during meetings of the Assembly, and is elected by secret ballot by fellow Members.
- MLAs sit in the desks on either side of the Chamber. Members of the governing caucus are mainly seated to the right of the Speaker, while Members of opposition caucuses are seated to the Speaker's left.
- The table in front of the Speaker's chair is where the Mace is placed during meetings of the Assembly. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and other Table Officers, who assist with the business of the Assembly, are seated there as well.
- Each Member's desk has a microphone that is used to record the proceedings which assists in the production of a printed public record called *Alberta Hansard*. *Alberta Hansard* can be found by visiting [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca).
- Proceedings in the Chamber are broadcast through Assembly Online.

## Fifth Floor

- Near the entrance to the east wing is an exhibit about Alberta's Famous Five. These five women were instrumental in changing Canadian law in 1929 to include women as "persons" and to establish that women were eligible to be appointed to the Senate. Each woman played a significant role in Alberta's political and social history.
- On the north side of the floor is an acoustic phenomenon called the "Magic Spot." The sound of the fountain in the Rotunda below travels up the Grand Staircase, reflects off the dome and drops back down on this spot. When one stands on the "Magic Spot", it sounds as if water is falling from overhead.
- The *Partners in Service* exhibit was installed during the Legislature Building's centennial year. It honours the contributions made by the partners of Alberta's Premiers.