

## **RULES FOR PARLIAMENTARY STYLE DEBATE**

### **Senior High – Parliamentary Style (2 Person Teams)**

Prime Minister Introduction	5 min
First Opposition	8 min
Second Government Speech	8 min
Leader of Opposition Speech (The last three minutes of the speech will constitute the official rebuttal and must not include any new constructive arguments)	8 min
Prime Minister's Official Rebuttal	3 min

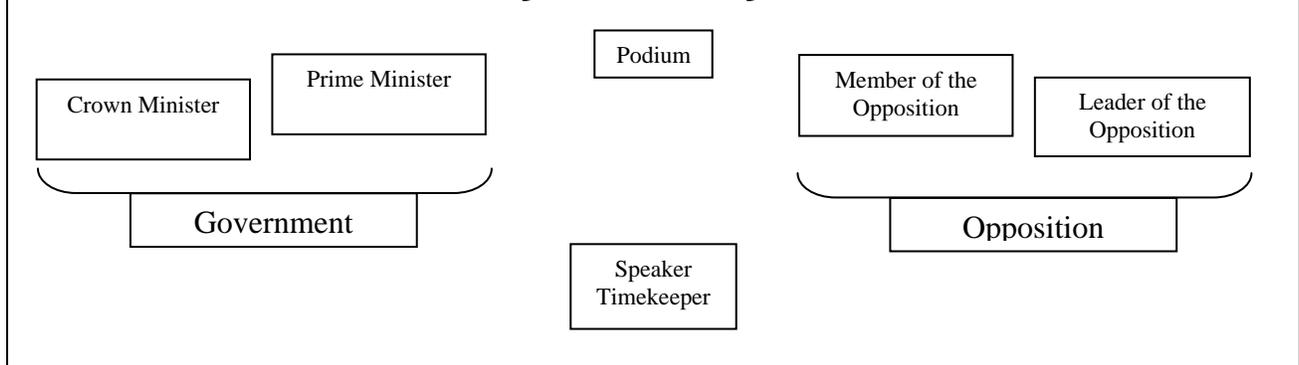
### **Bilingual Parliamentary Style (2 Speaker Teams)**

Prime Minister Introduction in French	5 min
First Opposition in French	8 min
Second Government Speech in French	8 min
Leader of Opposition Speech (The first five minutes in French) (The last three minutes of this speech in English will constitute the official rebuttal and must not include any new constructive arguments)	8 min
Prime Minister's Official Rebuttal in English	3 min

## Summary

<p>Parliamentary debate is a standard style derived from the rules and conventions used in Parliament.</p> <p>It is a more formal style than other forms. Only one person may have the floor (stand) at one time and NO offensive or profane language may be used.</p> <p>Members cannot refer to each other by their names but only by their position and in the third person. All remarks are addressed to the <b>Speaker</b> and never directly to the other person.</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p><b>Wrong:</b> “You were wrong when you said there will be no benefits from Hibernia”</p> <p><b>Right:</b> “Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was wrong when he/she said there will be no benefits from Hibernia”</p> <p>Heckling is permitted (short, witty and to the point and only against opponents please) along with Points of Order (rule infractions) and Points of Personal Privilege (personal insults, misrepresentations etc.)</p>	<p>There are two teams of 2 people:</p> <p>The Government has a Prime Minister (PM) and a Crown Minister (CM) and their roles are to introduce the Resolution, define the terms, and present their case/plan.</p> <p>The Opposition has the Member of Opposition (MO) and the Leader of the Opposition (LO). Their role is to rebut and refute the Government case and points.</p> <p>Speeches should never be read and props cannot be used.</p>
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## Physical Layout



Speaker	Roles and Debate Order	Time
PM	Has the Burden of Proof and must show why the government side must be adopted. Introduces resolution, defines major terms, presents the basic government case (position) along with three or more constructive points (reasons) in favour of the House adopting the resolution.	5 min.
MO	Outlines why the government case is flawed/wrong. Refutes the government case (specifically attacks all government points presented by the PM) and, if there is time, introduces new Opposition constructive rebuttal points (specific additional reasons raised by the Opposition for why the Government case is wrong).	8 min.
CM	Backs up the PM and rebuilds the Government position and the points introduced by the PM, rebuts and refute the Opposition points.	8 min.
LO	Constructive: Backs up the CM and rebuilds the Opposition position by reinforcing the Opposition points. Attacks the Government position.	5 min.
LO	Rebuttal: Summarizes the Opposition side and restates the opposition points. No new evidence or points may be used here.	3 min.
PM	Summarizes the Government side and restates the Government case and points. No new evidence or points may be used except in direct attack to the LO.	3 min

# An Introduction to Parliamentary Debate

## Acknowledgements

This paper owes a great deal to many people and organizations. Particular thanks go to Daphne Gray-Grant, *Remarks on Parliamentary Debate* (1978); and Judith Wyatt, *Advanced Debating Techniques* (1984). John Filliter, besides offering general advice, also corrected these remarks when they appeared in part in *Some Elements of Debate*.

## Introduction

Parliamentary debate, with its opportunity for wit and Parliamentary interruptions, is a lively debate format. It offers rewards to those who think on their feet and can remain confident and good-natured in the face of criticism. It also gives the debater with a flare for policy a chance to show off this talent. Because of the opportunity for a debater to be interrupted at any stage of his remarks, it is particularly important that he be well organized and that his remarks be visibly structured, so that the audience is able to follow his thread of thought despite interruptions during the course of the debate.

## Features of Parliamentary Debate

Educational Parliamentary debate attempts to transform the detailed discussion that occurs in the House of Commons (sitting as the Committee of the Whole House) to a format that teaches principles of reasoning, research and argument. In this style of debate, “[O]pponents are not referred to as opponents. The other team is called the Government or the Opposition, as the case may be. The Prime Minister’s full title is ‘The Honourable *the* Prime Minister’ (the definite article is used twice). Ditto for the Leader of the Opposition.” (Gray-Grant, *Remarks on Parliamentary Debate*) The other members of the teams are the second Government member (or the Minister of Finance, Defence, etc.) and the first speaker for the Opposition. (The Leader of the Opposition is the *last* negative speaker.) Similar titles are used for additional debaters in three-a-side debates.

Parliamentary debate, in addition to taking place in a Parliamentary setting, also differs from other styles of debate in its convention that resolutions be *questions of policy*. The Government does not merely express an opinion (“Health care costs are unacceptably high”, “Capital Punishment is an effective deterrent to murder”, “The level of unemployment is unacceptably high”); it also proposes a change in policy (“The federal government limit the availability of medicare”, “Capital Punishment be reinstated”, “The government devote greater resources to the retraining of the unemployed”). Except in impromptu Parliamentary debates, where a Plan is optional, the Government is required to produce a detailed *Plan* outlining how the proposed changes in policy are to be implemented: Rule 2 of the Canadian Student Debating Federation’s (CSDF’s) General Rules of Debating.

The Government in a policy debate, then, must show that:

1. The value statement [goal] is desirable and is not being satisfactorily achieved; and
2. The Government plan will substantially achieve that goal, and will do so better than the alternatives.

In the examples already discussed, a value statement is that “limiting medicare would be ‘good’ (for whatever reason: perhaps because health care costs are unacceptably high)”; the plan might be that medicare be limited to individuals whose family income is less than \$18,000.00 a year who suffer from a chronic illness, with an annual per-family deductible of \$200.00. Or, in the third example, “It is desirable to retrain the unemployed (for whatever reason: perhaps because the level of unemployment is unacceptably high)”, the Plan might be that the government establish fourteen centres, one in each of the following cities (list them), staffed by the following sorts of vocational counsellors (describe them) to be available to the chronically unemployed (define them) under the following conditions (define them).

It is the Government, not the Opposition, that proposes the change to the existing state of affairs (the “status quo”); this is accomplished by the rule that requires the resolution (the “Bill”) to be worded in a positive manner. The proposed change will be measured against the status quo or any counterproposal offered by the Opposition (a “Counter-Plan”). To succeed in discharging its burden of proof, the Government must therefore show that there is something wrong with the status quo (a need for a change) and that the Government proposal (the “Plan”) will remedy that wrong. In the event that the Opposition proposes an alternative means of remedying the wrong, the Opposition assumes the burden of proof and the debate focuses on which Plan will better succeed. Because debaters have only a limited amount of time, the Government (or, in the event of a Counter-Plan, the Opposition) does not need to present a perfect case, answering every possible objection: it is enough to establish that, on balance, its case is more likely right than not (proof on a “balance of probabilities”). As well, while a Plan or Counter-Plan must be proved to be feasible, it need not be shown to be legal or constitutional: CSDF General Rule 11. On the other hand, inclusion of “should” in the resolution does not relieve the Government of the duty to present a Plan or prove that the course of action entailed in implementing the Plan is warranted. (See the section on “Analysis” in *Some Elements of Debate* by Brian Casey.)

The rules of Parliamentary debate differ only slightly from those of Academic and Cross- Examination style debating. The main differences are:

1. Parliamentary interruptions (Points of Order and Privilege) and heckling may occur at any time during the debate.
2. Unlike Cross-examination debate, there is no opportunity to cross-examine members of the opposing team (though questions may be raised by heckling and rhetorically during speeches).

3. “[A]ll remarks are addressed to the Speaker. Debaters should begin their speeches with the introduction, ‘Mr. Speaker, ...’, not ‘Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members ...’ It is an effective rhetorical device to refer to the Speaker in one’s debate: ‘... and can you believe, Mr. Speaker, the illogical plan of the Government?’”  
(Gray-Grant, *Remarks on Parliamentary Debate*).

Procedures that prevail in a Parliamentary debate are much the same as those in a Cross-examination or Academic debate, with a chairman (the “Speaker”) moderating and introducing each debater at the beginning of his or her remarks.

Speaking times are similar to those used in Academic and Cross-examination debate, with all debaters receiving an equal amount of speaking time (apart from heckling and any Parliamentary points that may be raised).

In Canada, two types of Parliamentary debate are in use. The usual and traditional one follows the **Oxford rebuttal format**, in which each debater except for the Prime Minister must incorporate rebuttal into his or her single block of speaking time. In this format, the speaking order and sample speaking times are:

Prime Minister (constructive speech)	5 minutes
1st Opposition debater (constructive speech/rebuttal)	8 minutes
2nd Government member (constructive speech/rebuttal)	8 minutes
2nd Opposition speaker (constructive speech/rebuttal)	8 minutes
3rd Government member (constructive speech/rebuttal)	8 minutes
Leader of the Opposition (constructive speech/rebuttal)	8 minutes
Prime Minister (official rebuttal)	3 minutes

It is also possible, although unusual, to employ the **Cambridge rebuttal format** in Parliamentary style. In this case, the speaking order and typical maximum speaking times for two-person teams would be:

Prime Minister (constructive speech)	5 minutes
1st Opposition debater (constructive speech)	5 minutes
2nd Government member (constructive speech)	5 minutes
Leader of the Opposition (constructive speech)	5 minutes
1st Opposition speaker (rebuttal)	3 minutes
2nd Government member (rebuttal)	3 minutes
Leader of the Opposition (rebuttal)	3 minutes
Prime Minister (rebuttal)	3 minutes

(The constructive speeches in two-person team debates are often 7 minutes.)

## The Government Case

### 1. Necessity for a Plan

As previously noted, CSDF General Rule 02 requires the Government in a prepared Parliamentary debate to propose a Plan. Such a Plan is optional (but may be highly desirable, as it can provide extra content) in an impromptu debate.

Because Parliamentary debates focus on questions of policy, it is important that the Government team give careful attention to the preparation of a detailed Plan. In particular, the Government should consider addressing the following issues in its Plan:

- (a) **Cost** involved, and how it will be afforded;
- (b) The **mechanism** for implementing the plan; (For example, will there be a new government agency, or a change in existing legislation?)
- (c) **Timing** (Over what period will the Plan be phased in?);
- (d) **Consequences** and what will be done to alleviate disadvantages of the Plan; (For example, what will be done about those displaced as a result?)
- (e) **Structure**. (For example, the manpower required, enforcement measures, penalties for violation.)

Certain issues take particular prominence in different debates. In a debate on the resolution, "Be it resolved that the federal government take steps to reduce Acid Rain", for example, all of the above issues are relevant: cost, mechanism, timing, consequences (What will be done for those thrown out of work by the closing of offending factories?), and structure (What is to be done to violators?) By contrast, a debate on reinstating Capital Punishment will probably focus on the value statement (whether it is desirable) and not on the Plan. In such a debate, it would still be necessary to detail briefly how the Criminal Code would be amended, for what crimes capital punishment would be imposed, whether conviction of a capital crime would require particular rules of evidence or jury selection, whether the execution would be performed by lethal injection, hanging, gassing or electrocution, when the change would come into force and what provision would be made for those awaiting trial at the time of the new law.

Government teams lose many debates by poorly thought-out Plans, and win many by anticipating potential Opposition arguments and Plan objections and tailoring the Plan to overcome these objections. Government debaters should therefore craft their Plan carefully and Opposition debaters should be vigilant to spot Plan weaknesses.

CSDF General Rule 11 requires that a Plan must be introduced in the first Government speech and be completely described *before* the last Government constructive speech; thus in a two-person team debate, the Prime Minister must both introduce and completely describe the Plan in his opening address while in a three-person team debate, the second Government member may complete the description of the Plan. (The rule makes similar requirements for Counter-Plans.)

## **2. Elements requiring Proof**

Each issue that arises in the debate presents three parts to consider:

- (1) the value statement,
- (2) the need for change, and
- (3) the effect of the Plan.

In a debate that “Canada withdraw from all military alliances”, the value statement for a particular issue might be that “military alliances are too costly”, “military alliances are unnecessary”, “military alliances endanger world peace”, or “military alliances offer Canada inadequate protection”. (These may be linked: for example, the cost may be too great given the level of protection we receive.) These statements can actually be broken down further: when we say “military alliances offer inadequate protection”, we are really making two assertions: that some (particular) level of protection is necessary (or desirable) and that the present level of protection does not reach that standard. Together, these two assertions may establish the need for change.

The Government must also show how the Plan meets this need - in this instance, by increasing the level of protection. Sometimes the value statement may be obvious but the need for change difficult to show; at others, the need for change will be obvious but the success of the Plan difficult to demonstrate. In the above example, one of the value statements is that “world peace is a good thing” - something with which most people would probably agree. It is not at all clear, however, that military alliances endanger (rather than safeguard) world peace. So the need for change is unclear. In order to win a particular issue, the Government must show that its value statement is correct, that there is therefore a need for change, and that the Plan answers the need. For the Opposition to win an issue, the Government need only fail in one of these tasks (unless the Opposition introduces a Counter-Plan, in which case it assumes the full burden of proof from the Government).

## **The Opposition Case**

### **1. Generally**

A Parliamentary debate offers distinct targets for the Opposition to attack: the value statement and the Plan. The Opposition, however, cannot forecast exactly what the Government Plan will be. It is therefore essential that the Opposition research thoroughly. Only then can it hope to anticipate all potential Government Plans and know the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Once that is done, the Opposition must evaluate the six arguments available in response to each value statement and decide which it will use in the debate:

1. The Opposition may disagree with the value statement. (This will rarely happen.) In the earlier example, that Canada withdraw from military alliances, one reason suggested was that the alliances offer inadequate protection. This could be analyzed as “X level of protection is desirable” (value statement); “Military alliances now offer only Y level of protection to Canada” (taken together, the need for change); “Therefore Canada should withdraw from alliances and place her military

expenditures in Z over a three year period” (Plan). The Opposition in this case might well disagree that X level of protection is desirable.

2. “Prove it.” The Opposition argues that whether or not the value statement is true, there is a need for change, or the Plan is sound (and it might stop short of denying this), the evidence is insufficient to justify the conclusion. The case is unproved. (Without the support of one of the other arguments, this is not a very powerful attack. As with any rebuttal, however, the Opposition will probably discover that parts of the Government case have not been logically proved. A specific attack on these parts may torpedo an otherwise successful Government case.)
3. If the Opposition agrees with the value statement (as they probably will), only four arguments remain:

A. *Deny the need for change.* The Opposition maintains that the Government has not shown a need for change: the status quo adequately achieves the value statement identified, and therefore no problem exists. (In practise, this tends to blur with Attack 1, above.) Even a weak Government team will normally have identified some need for change in coming to its Plan - so it will be rare that the Government will be so inept that you are able to make this attack. Occasionally, however, the Government will assume agreement on the need for change which does not exist. For example, in a debate on increasing military expenditures, the Government might rely on Canada’s obsolete Armed Forces as sufficient justification of the value statement; the Opposition, however, might maintain that the current level of expenditure is adequate because it denies that increased defence spending would increase national security, or because the country simply cannot afford any further expenditure *on anything* at this time.

B. *Admit the need for change* (the status quo needs to be improved) *but suggest:*

- i. *Repairs* - Minor changes (perhaps more funding, manpower or more effective monitoring for violations) will correct the problem and so no major change is needed (which is otherwise too costly, radical or unwieldy). The significance of the Government advantage is challenged and the inherency of the need for change disputed. (For example, parole violations may not justify the reinstatement of Capital Punishment; instead they may call for tighter parole procedures.)
- ii. *Counter-Plan* - There is a need for change, but the Opposition has a plan that will meet the need better than the Government’s Plan. A Counter-Plan has two essential requirements: the Counter-Plan must be superior to the Plan in some respect (for example, cost, efficiency, or fewer disadvantages) and it must differ significantly from the Plan. (See Part 2. C., below.)
- iii. *Plan Objections* (short of a Counter-Plan)

- a. No solution. The Opposition admits there is a need for change but denies that the Government's Plan solves the problem.
- b. Disadvantages. The Opposition admits there is a need for change (and sometimes, although not necessarily, that the Government Plan achieves its purpose) but argues that the disadvantages make the change undesirable on balance.

One of these six attacks deserves special discussion.

## **2. The Counter-Plan**

### **A. Formal Requirements**

**A Plan or Counter-Plan must at least be outlined during the first speech of the team proposing it and be completely described before the team's last constructive speech. A Plan or Counter-Plan may be introduced informally (that is, it requires no formal motion of amendment or seconder); it must be shown to be feasible but not necessarily legal or constitutional.**

**A Counter-Plan may be proposed only if the affirmative has already introduced a Plan. A Counter-Plan must be proven to be an alternative solution to the problem addressed by the resolution, significantly different from the affirmative proposal, a significant change from the status quo, and demonstrably more desirable than the affirmative Plan.**

### *Rule 11, CSDF General Rules of Debating*

It follows from Rule 11 that in two-person team debating, the Counter-Plan must be completely described by the first Opposition speaker. The essence of the Counter-Plan case is to admit the need for change and instead take issue with the Plan. The debate, in effect, then focuses on the relative ability of the Plan and Counter-Plan to meet the admitted need for change (though the affirmative team is at liberty to dispute the need for a change once a Counter-Plan has been introduced, as it no longer bears the burden of proof).

### **B. When to Use a Counter-Plan**

The Counter-Plan is an attractive alternative strategy for Opposition teams to consider. It offers the following advantages:

1. It heightens the clash in the debate;
2. It allows the Opposition to take the offensive. It may force the second Government debater to throw away his prepared speech and deal instead with the Opposition Counter-Plan. This may catch the Government by surprise and thereby give an advantage to the Opposition;

3. It rewards teams with policy talents; and
4. It is content oriented and therefore may give an individual better point totals than mere denials of the Government case.

Opposition debaters are often uncomfortable with a Counter-Plan, however. In the first place, they are reluctant to assume the burden of proof in the debate, especially since the affirmative team will still have the last word. Opposition debaters may think they have an easier job of it if the Government has the burden of proof and all they need do is snipe at Government faults. It is true that in assuming the burden of proof the Opposition debaters increase the likelihood of losing the debate - they must now establish on balance that the Counter-Plan is better than the Plan. But they may improve their individual point scores in the process (by having more concrete content in their remarks). In most provincial tournaments (and at National Seminars) the competition is decided on individual scores, not win-loss results. So in some events, any apparent disadvantage caused by assuming the burden of proof is illusory and may be more than compensated for by the added content introduced, or the other advantages noted above.

A Counter-Plan is sometimes inappropriate: in debating a resolution which apparently focuses on the need for change (for example, that Capital Punishment be reinstated) it may be unwise to admit the need for change and instead argue about Plan details. Similarly, whether a Counter-Plan should be used depends on the cleverness of the Plan presented: if a very good Plan is presented, a Counter-Plan may be the only effective answer to the Government case. Ironically, if a very good Government Plan is presented, you may be unable to devise a better Counter-Plan and instead be forced to attack the need for change. So even though you intend to use a Counter-Plan, remain flexible until you have heard the Government Plan. If you decide not to use a Counter-Plan, you can still rely on the research you have done to show that the existing Plan details are weak or unsound (in those respects that they differ from the Counter-Plan you would have presented).

#### C. How Different must the Counter-Plan be?

Under CSDF General Rule 11, the Opposition must prove that a Counter-Plan is "significantly different from the affirmative proposal". This ingredient of the burden of proof assumed by the Opposition should not be overlooked.

Some Opposition debaters are concerned that the Counter-Plan they use will end up admitting too much of the Government case. In fact, such a strategy - admitting all but one key part of the Government case or Plan - is very effective. Typically the Government argument will be divided among all parts of the case. When the Opposition admits most of these points, it renders much of the Government arguments useless. The Opposition is able to focus its speeches entirely on one or two points - which the Government, needing to cover everything, could defend only briefly.

If a resolution requires the Government to propose a particular Plan, the Counter-Plan must deny the substance of the resolution. So, for example, in a debate on the resolution, "University tuition fees be abolished", the Opposition could present a Counter-Plan proposing that "University housing and accommodation costs be subsidized". This is

an alternative solution to the problem (the high cost of attending university) and is arguably superior: housing is a larger expense than tuition, and less directly related to a student's education. When students must pay their own tuition fees, they acquire a stake in their education. The same is not true of mere living expenses. Accordingly, housing costs should be subsidized for university students, not tuition fees. This Counter-Plan denies the resolution. It would *not* be sufficient for the Counter-Plan to admit that tuition fees should be abolished but argue that housing costs should *also* be subsidized because this would not exclude the operation of the resolution.

When a resolution does not require a specific Government Plan, but merely outlines the need for change, it is submitted that a different result obtains. For example, the resolution "The federal government take steps to balance the federal budget" does not explicitly dictate the Plan (which could be to raise taxes or revenues from other sources, or to lower expenditures). Therefore, it would be proper for an Opposition team in such a debate to counter a Government Plan that expenditures be decreased with a Counter-Plan that expenditures remain constant but taxes be increased or revenues be raised from other sources. Such a Counter-Plan is an alternative solution to the problem with which the resolution is concerned and is distinctly different from the Government *Plan*; even though it does not deny the *resolution*. In my opinion, this should be sufficient to satisfy the spirit as well as the exact wording of CSDF General Rule 11, assuming that the Opposition proves the Counter-Plan to be "significantly different from" and "demonstrably more desirable than" the Government Plan.

#### D. How to Introduce a Counter-Plan

If you are going to introduce a Counter-Plan, do so firmly and clearly. The audience must not be left to wonder whether you are merely criticizing Plan details or whether this a genuine Counter-Plan. Introduce the matter with words such as, "The Opposition admits (whatever the need for change is) but denies that the Plan is the best way to (meet that need). The Opposition proposes the following Counter-Plan, which we submit is superior to the Plan in respect of (cost, efficiency or whatever)." Then state the Counter-Plan details and present the Opposition arguments.

### **Parliamentary Points**

There are two types of Points permitted in Parliamentary style debates: Points of Order and Points of Privilege, which both confer the *right to interrupt*). Points of Order and Privilege may be raised at any time unless there is already another such Point on the floor.

#### **1. Points of Order and Privilege**

A Point of Order may be raised whenever a rule of debate has been broken, except for repetition or irrelevance: CSDF Parliamentary Rule 08.(a). A Speaker who notices such a breach may call the House to order himself or herself. If the Speaker does not, any of the debaters may raise a Point of Order. Rules of the House which often give rise to Points of Order through their breach include:

- (a) Form of Address required. Debaters must refer all remarks to the Speaker and must refer to one another in the third person by title. Hence the objection, “Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister failed to refer to you ...”;
- (b) Language permitted in the House. Unparliamentary language such as “liar” is not allowed;
- (c) Who may hold the floor, in what sequence, and for what length of time;
- (d) What conduct is permitted in the House. (Example: heckling must be verbal.)

A Point of Privilege may be raised by a debater whose privileges as a member have been infringed by being misquoted, misrepresented, slandered or referred to incorrectly: CSDF Parliamentary Rule 08.(b). Other privileges of members are the right to be treated with respect, to comment on any matter coming before the House when his or her turn comes, and to comment on speeches which have already been given. Such a point is “personal” to the member, so only the member whose privilege has been impugned (or the Speaker) may raise it.

The **procedure for raising a Point of Order or Privilege** is as follows:

1. The member rises and says (without waiting to be recognized by the Speaker) “Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order [or Privilege].” and remains standing.
2. If another debater has the floor at that time, he or she sits down.
3. The Speaker then calls upon the debater who has raised the point to explain the interruption, saying “I recognize the Honourable, the Leader of the Opposition. Please explain your Point of Order [Privilege].”
4. The debater who has raised the point must then explain it briefly, making specific reference to the rule broken or comment complained of. For example, “Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in breach of Rule 19 because he is introducing new constructive evidence in his final rebuttal.” The debater raising the point sits down.
5. The Speaker will then rule whether the point was “well taken” (justified) or “not well taken”. Such points and the rulings on them are not debatable.
6. A debater who was interrupted then resumes the floor. If the point was well taken, he or she should apologize to the House (and withdraw the remark, if applicable), then continue with his or her speech.

## 2. Time

The time taken to raise (and rule on or answer, if necessary) one of these points is added on to that of the interrupted speaker, *even if* a point is “well taken”. Thus a debater who is frequently interrupted will not lose any speaking time, although the interruption to the flow of his or her speech may be unfortunate. A debater who is asked a question, however, thereby obtains an extra block of speaking time. It is therefore advisable to ask questions sparingly.

## The Judging Ballot

At the National Seminar and in most provincial competitions, debaters are judged using a ballot similar to that used for other styles of debate. The National Ballots have a separate category in which to evaluate "Debate Skills", which in Parliamentary style debating, would include one's ability to handle heckling and other interruptions, and Parliamentary role-playing.

Revised by  
John D. Filliter  
October 2004

Written by  
Brian P. Casey  
October 1984

**Points of Information were abolished at the 1999 Rules Committee Meeting of the Canadian Student Debating Federation. In case they should be resurrected in the future, the following description of these Points is printed in this box:**

The Point of Information is a formal means of asking a question of a debater who has the floor, but it may be raised only with the consent of the interrupted debater. A debater wishing to ask a question raises his arm (but must drop it if not recognized by the debater with the floor within half a minute). If the debater with the floor wishes to accept the question, he says "Mr. Speaker, I will entertain a question from my honourable friend" and sits down. The other debater stands and asks, for example, "Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister aware of the Ajax Treaty of 1973?", and sits down. The interrupted debater then resumes standing and continues with his speech, answering the question if he chooses. The member with the floor may state that he will be pleased to entertain a question at the conclusion of his address, or simply ignore his would-be questioner. The Speaker plays no part in the questioning or the answering.

Only a single question may be asked on each such Point of Information; it is not Question Period (with supplementary questions) or Cross-examination. The Point must be phrased as a question, not a speech, although it may be so worded as to introduce information (as in the above example). Its most effective use is to pin down details of the opposing team's case. For example, "My question for the Government, Mr. Speaker, is how long would employees have to work before they were entitled to a pension, under the Government's Plan?"

## Rules for Parliamentary Debate

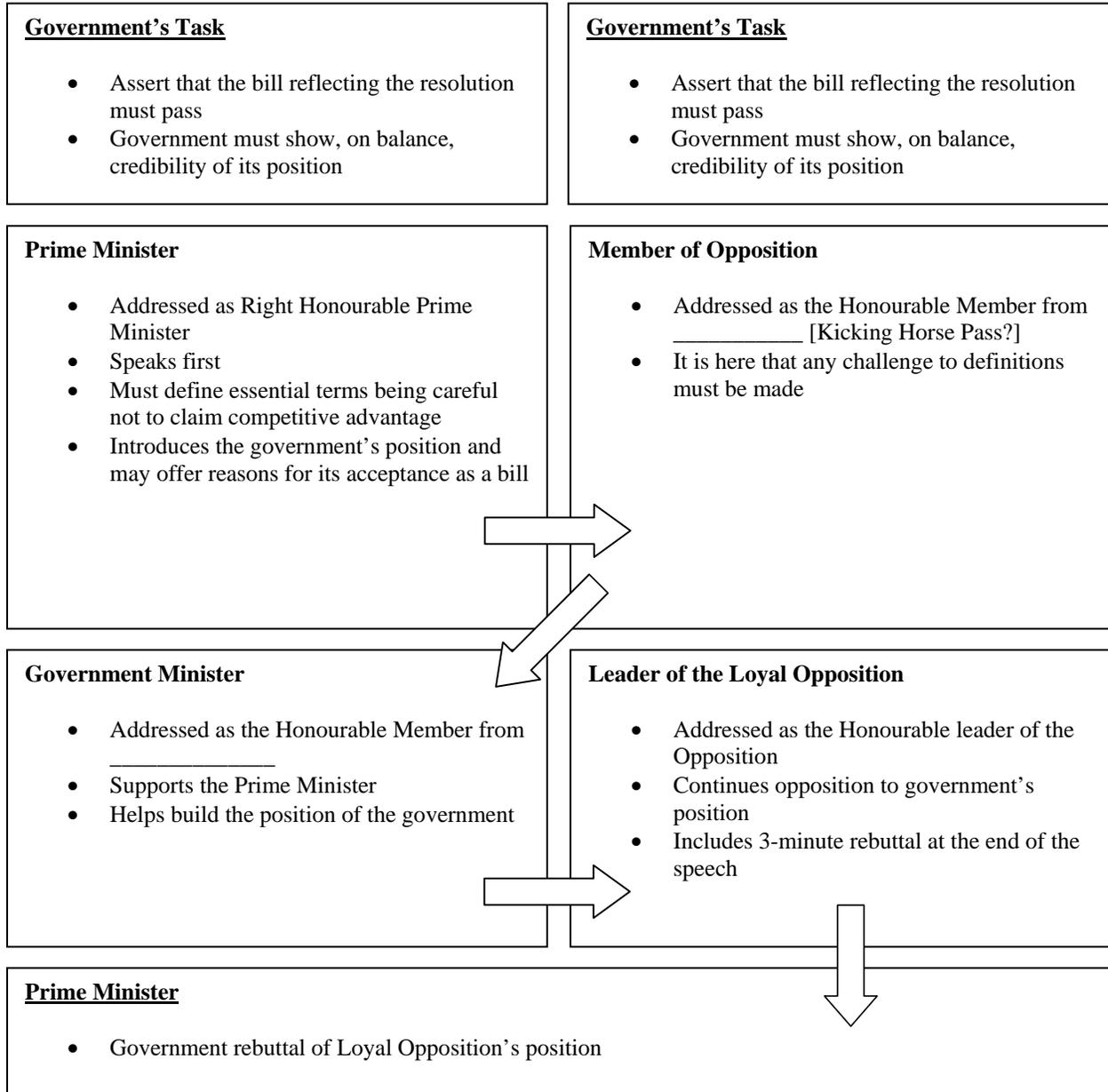
1. The moderator of a Parliamentary debate is called the "Speaker" and all debaters must address themselves to "Mr. [or Madam] Speaker" at the outset of their speeches. The affirmative side is called the "Government" while the "Opposition" represents the negative. Participants in the debate and members of the audience are referred to collectively as the "House" while the resolution is simply termed the "Bill". Debaters must always refer to one another in the third person (for example, "the Prime Minister", "Leader of the Opposition", "Minister of Communications", "Honourable Member from Ecum Secum", "second speaker for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition"), preferably by position. They must not call other debaters by their real names.
2. The House shall be assumed to be the House of Commons of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada at the present time unless otherwise specified by the Director, though debaters are not assumed to be the particular politicians or parties currently in power or opposition.
3. The Government team shall sit on the right side of the Speaker. The Opposition team shall sit on the left side.
4. Members will speak only when called upon by the Speaker, except for points of order or privilege.
5. When reprimanded by the Speaker, a debater should immediately apologize to the House. If a member becomes unruly or refuses to obey him or her, the Speaker may have the Sergeant-at-Arms remove the offender from the House by "naming" him or her (that is, referring to him or her by his or her real name). A debater who has been expelled from a contest in this manner may not return to the House for the duration of the debate, except with the permission of the Director.
6. Debaters shall not use any unparliamentary language (that is, foul, profane or offensive language or words abusing the House, any member thereof, the King or Queen, or a government official).
7. Only one debater at a time may hold the floor of the House. As soon as another member rises and addresses himself to the Speaker, an interrupted debater shall surrender the floor by sitting. The timer should stop the clock when a debater is interrupted, and start it again when he/she resumes.
8. A member may raise only two types of points: Points of Order and Points of Privilege. There may be only one point on the floor at a time; points are not debatable and the Speaker will rule on each independently. The time taken to raise, consider and rule on any point shall not be included in the interrupted debater's speaking time. Continual use of trivial points should be penalized.
  - (a) A Point of Order may be raised to draw the Speaker's attention to a breach of any of the rules of debating except repetition or irrelevance, and may involve misconduct by a person other than the debater interrupted. While a debater must raise such a point immediately after a rule has been contravened, the Speaker may also call a member to order on his or her own initiative.
  - (b) Points of Privilege include misquoting or misrepresenting an opponent (but not misinterpreting his or her remarks), referring to a member incorrectly, and slandering a member. No member may raise such a point on behalf of another member.

To raise a Point of Order, a debater shall stand and say, "Mr. [or Madam] Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order." A debater who is interrupted by such an objection shall immediately

surrender the floor by sitting down. The Speaker will then recognize the complainant and request, "Please explain your point." After the complainant has explained his or her objection, the Speaker shall rule whether the point was "Well taken" (valid) or "Not well taken". Finally, the Speaker will call upon the interrupted debater to continue delivering his or her speech. Similar procedures are to be followed for Points of Privilege.

9. Points should neither be too frequent nor trivial.
10. The Government must define the resolution. Their definition is expected to be reasonable and must be accepted unless it is undebatable. If the Opposition wishes to challenge the definition, they must do so by rising on a Point of Order immediately after the definition has been completed by the Prime Minister. In such cases, the Speaker will decide if the definition is reasonable. Debaters should remember that all Speakers will be students, not experts in debate definitions. It is in the best interests of all debate teams to avoid turning a debate into a battle over definitions.
11. If the debate is a policy debate, in which the Government comes up with a plan for implementing the resolution, the Opposition may choose to propose a counter-plan. A counter-plan is a significantly different way of carrying out the resolution. If the Opposition does this, the debate becomes an argument about which is the better plan.
12. During the final rebuttal speeches presented by the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, debaters may not bring up any new arguments or new evidence except in direct refutation of material which has already been presented.

# Values Debate Judge's Flow Sheet: Parliamentary



**Policy Debate Judge's Flowsheet (Judges may not discuss the debate with one another until they complete their ballot)**

**Step 3**

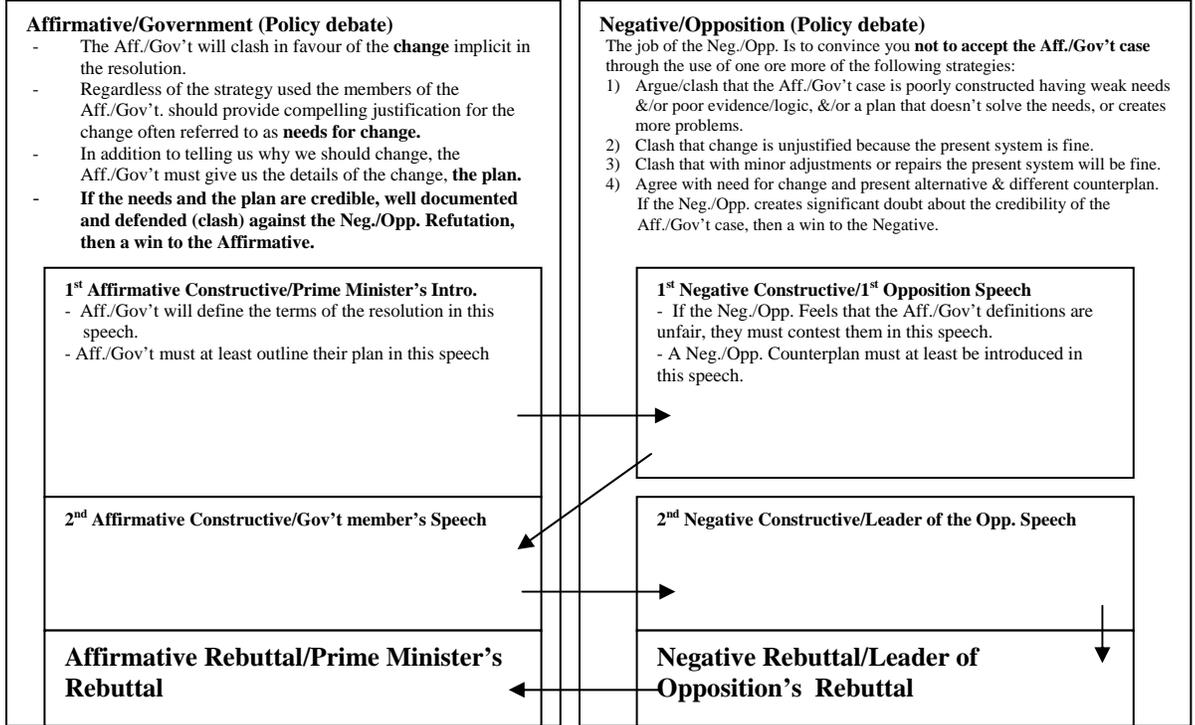
Use the flowsheet to take notes on the debate and record your impressions.

**Evidence/logic and contentions**

New evidence/logic may be introduced at any point during the debate. New contentions may be introduced at any point in the debate, except during the rebuttals and during the discussion part of a discussion debate. The last Aff./Gov't debater may introduce new contentions in response to new contentions introduced in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Neg./Opp.

**Step 4**

Return to the first page & check off the winning team.



**PARLIAMENTARY STYLE DEBATING**  
**SPEAKER'S SCRIPT**  
**(Two person team)**

Before you begin, you should write the exact resolution and the names of debaters in their speaking order on a blackboard clearly visible to all judges. Then have all debaters, officials and spectators sit down, and announce clearly and firmly:

The House will come to order. I am pleased to welcome you all to this \_\_\_\_\_ round of

\_\_\_\_\_.

The topic under debate today is "Be it resolved, that \_\_\_\_\_"

On my right, representing the Government, are:

The Prime Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ and

The Second Government Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will be:

It's First Speaker \_\_\_\_\_ and

The Leader of the Opposition: \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of the House, I extend a special welcome to our Judges:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and

\_\_\_\_\_

The Clerk of the House is \_\_\_\_\_, and I, \_\_\_\_\_, am your Speaker.

*Each debater will have 8 minutes to deliver his/her remarks:* The Prime Minister's time will be divided between a 5 minute opening speech and a 3 minute official rebuttal. The Clerk of the House will raise his/her right arm when a debater has one minute left to speak and will stand when the time has elapsed.

*As Speaker, I will entertain Points of Order Personal Privilege.* Heckling and Formal Questions will also be permitted, but only by competing debaters, and Judges will penalize any debater who interrupts another thoughtlessly or excessively or who lowers the level of debate. My decisions are final and cannot be appealed but the Judges will make allowances for the victims of my mistakes. Are there any questions regarding the Rules?

*Pause for Questions.* Once any raised have been answered, or if there are none, say: I call upon the Prime Minister to introduce the Bill, define the terms, and outline the Government case.

*After the Prime Minister's Speech, say:* I thank the Prime Minister for his/her remarks and remind the judges that they should not score any debater until they have heard all the speeches. We shall now hear the first speaker for the Opposition. If the Opposition intends to contest the Government definitions or to introduce a counter-plan, it must do so during this address.

*After the First Opposition Speech, say:* Thank you for your remarks. I now call upon the second Government speaker to deliver his/her speech.

*After the Second Government Speech, say:* Thank you. The Leader of the Opposition will now deliver the last speech opposing the Bill. It is her/his responsibility to complete the attack on the Government case and to defend and summarize the position of the Opposition. I remind the leader of the opposition that the last 3 minutes of this speech constitutes the Opposition rebuttal. During this (3) minute speech, although new evidence may be introduced, no new contentions may be introduced.

*After the Official Leader of the Opposition's speech, say:* I thank the Leader of the Opposition, and now call upon the Prime Minister to present the government's official rebuttal. During this 3 minute speech, although new evidence may be introduced no new contentions may be introduced.

*After the Government's official rebuttal, say:* Would the judges please complete their scoring and hand their score sheets in." (After all ballots are collected, **announce the winning team.**)

*(If time allows, say:* Would the judges please deliver their critiques?)

*Finally, say:* On behalf of the House, I thank the Judges and the Clerk for their assistance; I congratulate all the debater on their performances; and I thank the members of the Gallery for their attentiveness. Since this debate is now concluded and there is no other business on the Order Paper, the House stands adjourned.

## Debate Judge's Ballot Senior High Parliamentary

*(Judges may not discuss the debate with one another until they complete the ballot)*

**Step 1** - Please complete the information below

- a) Judge's name \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Room # \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Category of debate (please check)     Sr. Beg.     Sr. Open
- d) Round (please check)    1<sup>st</sup> round    2<sup>nd</sup> round    3<sup>rd</sup> round    Semi-final    Final

**Step 2** - Fill in the names of the debaters and, if applicable, their team code. Then go to step 3.

Government (Team code ____)			Opposition (Team code ____)	
Name _____	Name _____		Name _____	Name _____
Prime Minister	Gov't Member	<b>Criteria for individual evaluation</b> A scale of 1 to 5, 1 is poor and 5 is excellent	Opposition Member	Leader of Opposition
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Organization:</b> The speech should be well structured, logical & coherent, containing and effective introduction and conclusion	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Evidence/Logic:</b> Facts, statistics & authorities offered in support of contentions must be sound. Credit should be given for thorough and relevant research.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Delivery:</b> Poise quality & use of voice, combined with emphasis, variety and enunciation. Effectiveness and ease of gestures, and eye contact should be assessed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Refutation/Clash:</b> The ability to apply logic and evidence in refuting the opponents' contentions while defending your own.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Format:</b> Does each debater demonstrate an understanding of parliamentary procedure & adhere to the rules of the house? Are points of order & privilege appropriately used? Are heckles short, witty & relevant?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
____/25	____/25	<b>Totals</b> (please double check addition)	____/25	____/25

**Step 3** - Use the flowsheet on the following page to take notes on the debate & record your impressions of the debate.

**Step 4** - In the space provided below, **please check which team you believe has won the debate.** (Your decision should be based on an objective appraisal of the arguments (clash), evidence/logic & refutation which you have witnessed in the debate).

The winning team is:     Government  
                                       Opposition

**Step 5** - Please complete the individual evaluations in the table above.

**Step 6** - If time permits, the chairperson will call on you to make constructive and positive remarks.

*Thank you!*