

Research Package #3

(Junior and Senior High)

“THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THE CANADIAN SENATE DOES NOT HAVE A PLACE IN MODERN DAY GOVERNMENT.”



“This house believes the Canadian Senate does not have a place in modern day government.”

The **PROPOSITION TEAM** will support the motion and say **YES**.
The **OPPOSITION TEAM** will oppose the motion and say **NO**.

Both Proposition and Opposition Teams will try to pick about 3 or 4 good reasons to support their position and try to develop each by going through 4 steps:

1. State your point.
2. Explain your point.
3. Provide evidence in support of your point (give an example).
4. Explain how that evidence proves your point (tie it back to your theme)

Each argument will look like this:

Point #1: _____

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

Tie point to theme: _____

Point #2: _____

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

Tie point to theme: _____

Point #3: _____

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

Tie point to theme: _____

PROPOSITION TEAM

The job of the Proposition in any debate is to persuade the judges that the resolution should be supported. In order to accomplish this, there are a number of steps that the Proposition team must go through.

- 1) Define the resolution (Make sure everyone is clear upon what the Proposition is debating).
- 2) Present criteria (halfway between a model and definition: clearly outline what would constitute free immigration).
- 3) Present arguments in favor of the resolution.
- 4) Refute Opposition attacks on the Proposition case. (Show why the Opposition is wrong and the Opposition is correct).

Owing to time restrictions, the Proposition's duties are normally divided up between the first and second Proposition speakers. It is customary for the first proposition speaker to present two arguments followed by the second speaker who presents the final argument.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PROPOSITION STATEMENT

"The Senate's existence is redundant. We can trust politicians in the House of Commons to pass good legislation without ratification by the Senate. The Senate can become obstructionist and block policy passed by the House of Commons for arbitrary reasons and without accountability, as Senators are not elected and not replaced on a regular schedule."

Here are some arguments that the Proposition can use in developing their case to support their arguments against the Senate:

- 1) The Senate's input on policy is illegitimate as it derives its power from appointments rather than from democratic consent. Senators are not elected and not held accountable for their decisions by the public, and have no right to govern without democratic endorsement.
- 2) Senators do not represent ridings and are not required to campaign to voters, so they may represent views, which are outdated, extremist, out of touch, or generally not in the interest of the Canadian public.
- 3) Senators never have to worry about getting re-elected, so they engage in unethical behavior like claiming illegitimate expenditures and covering up their lies. An MP in the House of Commons wouldn't do that, because they are afraid of losing their seat.
- 4) Long serving Prime Ministers have the power to appoint many Senators, and stack the Senate, so that even after they or their party is no longer in power they can influence policy, against the wishes of the voting public.

OPPOSITION TEAM

The job of the Opposition is to be disagreeable! Whatever the Proposition believes, generally, the Opposition counters. The more you disagree, the better! The Opposition has to convince the judges not to accept the Proposition resolution. The Proposition wants to convince the judges that their proposal should be adopted. The Opposition wants to convince you that the Proposition proposal should not be accepted for one or more reasons.

The steps that the Opposition should use are:

- 1) Either agree with the Proposition definition or propose a definition of your own. (Only disagree if absolutely necessary. These make for messy debates.)
- 2) Rebut the Proposition arguments in favor of the resolution.
- 3) Attack the Proposition Model and sometimes propose a counter model
- 4) Present reasons (arguments) to oppose the resolution.
- 5) Refute Proposition attacks on the Opposition case (show why the Proposition is wrong and Opposition is right).

Owing to time restrictions, the Opposition duties are divided between the first and second opposition speakers. It is the custom for the First Opposition Speaker to present two arguments and the second opposition speaker to present the final argument. (This is flexible!)

AN EXAMPLE OF AN OPPOSITION STATEMENT

“MPs are extremely risk averse to making decisions that are necessary but unpopular, and likely to pass policy that assures them short term job security but long term detriment to the country. Allowing the Senate to initiate legislation and check legislation for short-sightedness is a necessary check and balance on the interests of the House of Commons.”

Some of the arguments that the Opposition can use in developing their support for the Senate:

- 1) The PM appointing Senators is sufficient to ensure democratic legitimacy. While individual Senators are not chosen by the public at large, Canadian PMs are likely to appoint Senators, who share the values and policy goals of Canadian voters.
- 2) Because Senators are not required to cater the will of the public, they can vote their real opinions or beliefs, rather than having to consistently serve voters and special interest groups.
- 3) Senators serve for long periods of time, allowing individuals to gain a lot of experience in policy making and politics, making them more effective and intelligent leaders.
- 4) Senators have stopped bad policy in Canada before. In 2008, the Senate amended a bill, which would have given the PM extraordinary power on arts funding, picking and choosing personally, which moves would be funded.
- 5) The Senate regularly holds public hearings on important subjects, allowing individual citizens to talk to policy-makers and politicians on a person level and have their voice heard.

RESEARCH

For both Junior and Senior High Debaters, this motion should be set in Canada.

In Canada, Parliament is divided between the House of Commons and The Senate (Parliament is **bicameral**). The House of Commons has 308 seats. Each seat is occupied by one person responsible for representing everyone in one of 308 geographical areas in Canada (these geographical areas are somewhat arbitrary and drawn mostly to represent equivalent amounts of people despite varying in size). Members of the House of Commons are often referred to as Members of Parliament (MPs) and are elected every five years by the general public. The Senate is composed of 105 seats. Each member is appointed, rather than elected by the public, and may serve until the age of 75. Senators are appointed by the Prime Minister, who sits in the House of Commons and The Governor General.

The Governor General is the representative of the monarchy in Canada, and is officially the Head of State. Stephen Harper, the current Prime Minister, is the Head of Government.

All acts of Parliament, appointments, etc. made by the Head of Government (PM) must be confirmed by the Head of State (GG).

Both the House of Commons and The Senate are allowed to initiate legislation, though the Senate is barred from creating budgets or levying taxes. Both the House of Commons and The Senate must pass any proposed legislation before it is signed by the Governor General and becomes law.

The central question in this debate is the value of having a second legislative chamber to ratify and question the decision making of the first chamber.

This motion may be defined simply as "The Senate does more harm to Canada than it does good", or optionally if you are in High School and wish to add some complexity, you may introduce a model to abolish the Senate. Models, which change the Senate's functioning (make it elected, change the retirement age, change the way in which Senators are appointed) but keep the Senate otherwise intact do not support the motion on the Proposition side and should not be used.

External Links:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_senate

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameral_parliament

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicameral>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolished_upper_house