

Canadian National Debate Format

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The **Canadian National Debate Federation** style, which is also called CNDF, is the format for the Regionals, Provincials and the National High School Debating Championships. For this reason, it is the official format of the **Ontario Students Debating Union** (OSDU). In this format, there are two teams of two debaters. Each senior debater delivers an **8-minute** speech, and the lead speaker on each side closes with a **4-minute** rebuttal speech. For Junior debaters, they deliver **6-minute** opening speeches and **3-minute** rebuttals. The structure of each speech depends on the position of the speech. What follows is the order of the speeches, which is indicated by the numbering, and the structure of each speech.

PROPOSITION	OPPOSITION
Opening Speeches	Opening Speeches
1) Prime Minister (PM)	2) Leader of the Opposition (LO)
3) Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)	4) Deputy Leader of the Opposition (DLO)
Rebuttal Speech	Rebuttal Speech
6) Prime Minister (PM)	5) Leader of the Opposition (LO)

Part 1: Opening Speeches

PROPOSITION 1: Prime Minister (PM)

8 minutes

- a) **Anecdote:** To begin your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution, is very good practice, but it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, if you include one, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, your fellow debaters and by stating the Resolution.
- c) **Model:** The PM then ‘models’ the resolution, which means defining ambiguous words or phrases in the resolution; it also means stating the context, about which arguments should be made, such as Canada only or the world.
- d) **Arguments:** You then present your arguments, usually three, which are intended to prove why the resolution should be accepted.

OPPOSITION 1: Leader of the Opposition (LO)

8 minutes

- a) **Anecdote:** To begin your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution, is very good practice, but it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, if you include one, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.

- c) **Refutation:** These are criticisms of flaws in the Arguments of the PM. For example, a flaw often exists because the evidence does not support the claim, or the explanation of how the evidence supports the claim is unclearly stated.
- d) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually two, which are intended to prove why the Resolution should NOT be accepted.

PROPOSITION 2: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)

8 minutes

- a) **Anecdote:** To begin your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution, is very good practice, but it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, if you include one, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.
- e) **Refutation:** These are criticisms of flaws in the Arguments of the LO. For example, a flaw often occurs when the evidence does not support the claim or when the explanation of how the evidence supports the claim is unclearly stated. The DPM can also refute the refutation of the LO when a refutation of the LO misunderstood the arguments of the PM or the DPM.
- c) **Restatement:** This is a brief restatement of the arguments of the PM.
- d) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually one or two, which are intended to prove why the Resolution SHOULD be accepted.

OPPOSITION 2: Deputy Leader of the Opposition (DLO)

8 minutes

- a) **Anecdote:** To begin your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution, is very good practice, but it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, if you include one, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.
- c) **Refutation:** These are criticisms of flaws in the Arguments of the DPM. For example, a flaw often occurs when the evidence does not support the claim or when the explanation of how the evidence supports the claim is unclearly stated. The DLO can also refute the refutation of the DPM when a refutation of the DPM misunderstood the arguments of the LO.
- d) **Restatement:** This is a brief restatement of the arguments of the LO.
- e) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually one or two, which are intended to prove why the Resolution should NOT be accepted.

Part 2: Rebuttal Speeches

OPPOSITION 1: Leader of the Opposition (LO)

4 minutes

- a) The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the LO Rebuttal speech must focus

on how the Proposition side has not met the Burden of Proof, which are sufficient arguments that support the resolution. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

PROPOSITION 1: Prime Minister (PM)

4 minutes

- a) The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the PM Rebuttal speech must focus on how the Opposition side has not met the Burden of Rejoinder, which are criticisms of the arguments of the Proposition side. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

What is unique about this format?

The long 8-minute opening speeches for senior debaters is unique to this format. Because of the length, it can be challenging to provide sufficient content to complete the speech in impromptu debates. To fulfill this expectation, it is not a good strategy to have more arguments because it is very difficult to create more than 3 or 4 uniquely different arguments. A better strategy for the PM is to elaborate on the evidence that is used to support each claim, and for the other speakers, in addition to expanding your evidence, you should expand your refutations.