



Canadian Parliamentary Debate Unified Ruleset and Debating and Judging Manual

CUSID Canadian Parliamentary Manual and Unified Ruleset

Introduction

The Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate (CUSID) is the national organisation that governs and represents post-secondary debating in Canada. Before the creation of this Unified Ruleset and Manual, no such document existed and the rules of Canadian Parliamentary Debate were applied, taught and interpreted in a fractured and informal manner. The Unified Ruleset and Manual has, through consultation and research, sought to compromise and unify the rules of the format nation-wide, with the aim of standardising the format university-to-university and year-to-year. The Manual was written by Malcolm La Prairie and co-written by Anais Kneppers, with organisational and research assistance from Kyla Goulet-Kilgour. Special thanks to Nicholas Abernethy, Jaleelah Ammar, Navreet Kaur Sidhu, Daniel Svirsky, Madaline Pacurari, Lily McKay-De Carvalho, Diggory Waddle, Fiona Broughton, Raymond Qiu, Anders Woodruff, John Washburn, Rhys Nickerson, Ethan Curry, Jacob Silcoff, Micaela Lewis, Patrick Cowley, the University of Ottawa English Debating Society and the Carleton University Debating Society for their consultations on this manual.

Contact Links

We encourage all debaters to follow our social media in order to stay on top of CUSID programming, opportunities, and policy changes. You can follow us:

- On Facebook through: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/277912603314798/>
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For any questions or concerns, feel free to contact CUSID using social media or email:

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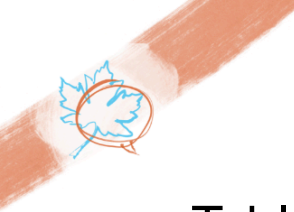


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The Core Rules of Canadian Parliamentary

Canadian Parliamentary Debate is a debate format inspired by the structure and traditions of the Canadian parliamentary system. The format has been around in some form for over a century and has gradually evolved over time. The following debating and judging manual for Canadian Parliamentary is predicated on the 'World Universities Debating Championships Debating and Judging Manual' ("WUDC Manual"), the rulebook for the British Parliamentary debate format. All rules and guidelines from the WUDC Manual apply to Canadian Parliamentary debate, except in the following cases: (1) Material made irrelevant by the Canadian Parliamentary format (e.g., there are no extension speakers), and (2) Material that conflicts with those in this manual (e.g., speaking times). The WUDC Manual covers the general principles of Parliamentary Debate, while the Canadian Parliamentary Manual covers the specific rules and regulations of Canadian Parliamentary Debate. For any questions on the general or specific terminology or strategies of debate that may not be covered in this manual, please refer to the latest iteration of the WUDC Manual.



1.0 The Basic Format of CP Debating: Two Teams, Four Speakers

There is one team on each side of the debate: His or Her Majesty’s Government and His or Her Majesty’s Opposition (or simply Government and Opposition). The Government is composed of a Prime Minister (“PM”) and a Minister of the Crown (“MOC”). The Opposition is composed of a Leader of Opposition (“LO”) and Member of Opposition (“MO”). Each team is assigned a side of the debate, and each speaker on the team is responsible for one of the listed roles corresponding to that side. In some cases, a speaker may be allowed to “iron” or “ironperson,” fulfilling both roles in their team. Tournaments may set their own rules on the legality of ironing.

The debate is presided over by a ‘Chair,’ a designated individual who oversees the proceedings of the debate, calling on speakers to speak and enforcing the rules. The Chair will be one of the judges – the individuals who will ultimately decide the result of the debate. Each debate will also usually have a timekeeper, who could be the Chair, another judge, or another individual who times speakers’ speeches.

2.0 Length and Order of Speeches

Canadian Parliamentary has ‘Constructive’ speeches and ‘Reply’ speeches. Constructive speeches are the main speeches in a debate where speakers present and develop their team's arguments and rebut the opposing team's points, all while adhering to specific expectations and constraints based on their role. Reply speeches are shorter, concluding speeches in a debate where speakers summarise their team’s case, defend key arguments, and rebut the opposing team’s points. Speakers may not add new substantive arguments in a Reply speech (see Section 2.9, “Summarising the Debate - Whip Speeches,” of the WUDC Manual for more information on what counts as new substantive arguments).

2.1 Traditional Round Structure

A traditional Constructive speech should last 7 minutes. A traditional Reply speech should last 3 minutes. Speakers are allowed an additional grace period of up to 15 seconds after their main speech time has ended. The traditional order is displayed in Exhibit 1.

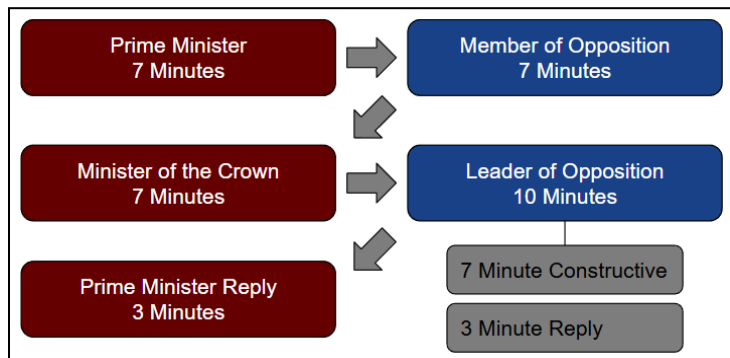


Exhibit 1: Traditional Order

As noted in the traditional order, there are five speeches total, with the LO's Constructive speech and the Opposition Reply combined into a single 10-minute speech. The last three minutes of the LO's speech serve as the reply and are subject to the same restrictions as any other Reply speech (that is, the final four minutes are Protected Time). The Government will always introduce and conclude the debate.

2.2 Alternative Round Structures

Unlike most debate formats, Canadian Parliamentary offers an alternative, optional length and order structure to both Government and Opposition.

2.2.1 Government Alternative: Prime Minister Reply Extended

The Government team may choose to move 1 minute from their PM’s Constructive speech to their PM’s Reply speech. This structure is called the ‘Prime Minister Reply Extended’ (“PMRE”). The traditional Government structure is referred to as ‘Traditional Government’ or ‘Prime Minister Reply’ (“PMR”).



Exhibit 2: PMRE

2.2.2 Opposition Alternative: Split Opposition

The Opposition team may choose to split their 10-minute speech into a 7-minute MO Constructive speech and a 3-minute LO Reply speech. Because the LO always speaks for the longest duration, they switch to delivering the first speech and also give the Reply speech, while the MO takes over the second speech. This change does not affect the round in practice, as a speaker's responsibilities are determined by their speaking order, not by their title. This structure is referred to as ‘Split Opposition.’ The traditional Opposition structure is referred to as ‘Traditional Opposition.’ There are six total speeches given in the Split Opposition order. As such, the LO would deliver the Reply speech immediately after the MO’s Constructive speech, and the PM would close out the round with their Reply speech.

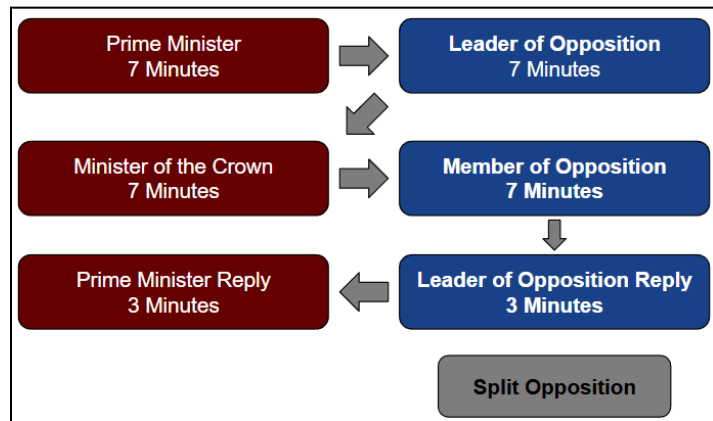


Exhibit 3: Split Opposition

3.0 Motions, Infoslides, and Cases

Each round has a specific topic, known as the ‘motion.’ In Canadian Parliamentary, the topic is set through a ‘straight motion’ or a ‘prepared case.’

3.1 Straight Motion

A straight motion is the default topic set by a team of senior judges at the tournament known as the ‘Adjudicator Core.’

3.2 Infoslide


An ‘infoslide’ is a brief piece of explanatory text provided alongside a motion to give debaters the necessary background information or context that may not be commonly known by the Average Reasonable Canadian Voter (see Section 4.2). The infoslide offers relevant definitions, facts, or hypothetical situations to ensure all participants can engage with the motion effectively. Infoslides must be clear and of a reasonable length with no information that is extraneous to the debate. An infoslide should not exceed 200 words or 1200 characters (including spaces). An example of an acceptable two-paragraph infoslide is as follows:

The UFC is the world’s premier Mixed Martial Arts promotion. Athletes compete in weight divisions to ensure size parity. Usually Mixed Martial Artists at the top level fight every 3-6 months depending on injury. Athletes get paid according to how good they are (i.e. unranked, ranked, champion) and how big of an audience they draw.

UFC Women’s Flyweight Champion Alexa Grasso won her belt in a spectacular upset victory over her weight class’s GOAT, an extremely dominant champ named Valentina Shevchenko. Grasso was the last top contender she hadn’t beaten. On account of Shevchenko’s long reign as champion, she was given a rematch which the judges declared a draw after a close fight, with Grasso retaining the championship as a result. The fanbase was split on who won, but was unanimous in saying it wasn’t a draw. TH is Alexa Grasso, who has just been offered a choice by the UFC: give Shevchenko a third fight, or defend the belt against an up-and-coming contender. She is Mexico’s first female champion and the face of Mexican MMA.

TH as Alexa Grasso W defend the belt against an up-and-coming contender.

This is a long infoslide and is at the upper limit of what should generally be accepted, but it is an acceptable length. It is within the two paragraph limit, and it restricts itself to relevant information about the case. Extraneous information that may be necessary is left out; this can be discovered during the question period - for example, Opposition may ask “how are Mixed Martial Arts scored,” at which point the Government can explain the sport further.



Infoslides should not feature argumentative or subjective information. For example, in the motion "THS the continuation of the rule of Vladimir Putin in Russia," an infoslide stating "Vladimir Putin is considered to have saved Russia from collapse following the disastrous rule of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin," is subjective. Infoslides should be written to comply with Calls as detailed in Section 4.3.1 and Section 4.3.2.

3.3. Prepared Case

A prepared case is a debate case that a team has developed before a debate. A Government team can bring its affiliated motion forward at the start of any debate round. Should there be a straight motion, the Government's declared motion will override and replace it. The Government team theoretically has an unlimited amount of time to prepare their case. An Opposition team debating a prepared case is referred to as 'Blind Opposition' because they are only given the motion at the start of the round, with no prior knowledge or preparation.

4.0 Debating and Judging in Canadian Parliamentary Debate

4.1 Winning a Debate

Teams in a debate are all aiming to win the debate. For both debaters and judges, the central statement on how teams win debates is as follows: "Teams win debates by being *persuasive* with respect to the *burdens* their side of the debate is attempting to prove, within the *constraints* set by the rules of Canadian Parliamentary Debating." Section 2.2, "What is Persuasiveness?" and Section 2.3, "Rebuttal, Engagement, and Comparisons," of the WUDC Manual outline how judges should evaluate persuasiveness and, as such, provide guidance on what speakers can do to be persuasive. All teams generally engage in both constructive argumentation and refutation to be persuasive. However, it is not required for the Government to rebut, nor for the Opposition to present constructive arguments, to win the debate.

4.2 Average Reasonable Canadian Voter

Judges assess the persuasiveness of speeches according to a set of shared judging criteria, rather than according to their own views about the subject matter. In Canadian Parliamentary, judges are asked to conceive themselves as if they were a hypothetical 'Average Reasonable Canadian Voter' ("ARCV"). The material defining the 'Average Reasonable Voter' ("ARV") in Section 2.1, "Judging who wins as the ordinary intelligent voter," and Section 2.2, "Facts, Knowledge, and Special Language" of the WUDC Manual applies to the ARCV. While the ARV comes from 'nowhere,' the ARCV comes from Canada. As such, the ARVC has the knowledge one would expect from someone who reads Canadian news sources frequently and in-depth. The ARCV's knowledge of Canadian affairs will be deeper than their global knowledge. For example, while the Average Reasonable Voter may not know that Sidney Crosby scored the "Golden Goal" during the Vancouver Olympics, the Average Reasonable Canadian Voter would. While the Average Reasonable Global Voter may not know that Canada is a monarchy, the

Average Reasonable Canadian Voter does. Both likely know that the United Kingdom likes Soccer more than it likes Basketball.

4.3 Role Fulfilment


Role fulfilment is the name given to the particular duties given to each team, by dint of their position, above and beyond the general duty to make persuasive arguments. The duties associated with role fulfilment are as follows:

1. For the Prime Minister, to define the debate (see the WUDC Manual).
2. For Reply speeches (or 3 minute portion of Traditional Opposition), to not add any new arguments.
3. For the second Opposition speaker (either 10 minute LO or 7 minute MO), to avoid making new independent arguments that are not flagged in the first speech, are unrelated to previous Opposition arguments, and are not rebuttals to the Government.
4. For all speakers, to take at least one point of information during their speeches and to offer points of information on a regular basis.
5. For all speakers, to speak within the time frame allotted.

Failure to meet role fulfilment should not result in an automatic loss, and judges should apply the appropriate remedy where possible, such as by not crediting new arguments from Reply speeches. For Section 4.3.3, special expectations apply to the second Opposition speech because the Government has only 3 to 4 minutes to reply to 10 minutes worth of content. New arguments are allowed in the Constructive portion of the second Opposition speech. However, not complying with the expectations should lead judges to partially credit new arguments, treating them as not fully proven or important. To avoid a breach of expectations, the second Opposition speaker can have their first Opposition speaker flag the arguments that will be run in the second Opposition speech or offer POI opportunities to the Government team after making their arguments. Arguments that clearly build upon or expand previous Opposition claims, as well as arguments made in direct response to Government claims, are generally not considered new independent arguments.

4.4 Government and Opposition Burdens

A “Burden” in debate may have multiple contextual meanings which may be explained within the British Parliamentary Worlds Manual. Within the specificities of Canadian Parliamentary debate, a “Burden” is often the term used to refer to what a team (usually Government) needs to prove in order to win the debate. For example, in *This House Would Ban Zoos*, not only would the Government team need to argue that zoos cause some sort of notable problem that outweigh their benefits, but that these problems are unlikely or unable to be solved absent a ban.



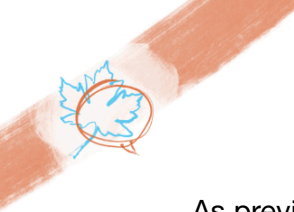
Whichever team proves more and is more persuasive than their opponent will win the debate. They will do this with the impact and weight of their arguments, and by proving the truth and importance of their case. The slightest advantage for the Government should still go to the Government (even if all they can prove is \$2 of profit for the main actor), and the same is true of the Opposition.

4.5 Calls

A “Call” is a challenge made by the Opposition team signalling that there is an issue with the motion or arguments presented by the Government team that warrants special evaluation by the judges. These Calls are used to address significant fairness concerns or structural flaws in the debate that could affect its outcome. Calls are an important aspect of Canadian Parliamentary because Opposition teams must debate prepared cases presented by Government teams without any preparation time. Only a Blind Opposition can use a Call. It is not sufficient for the Opposition to simply assert a Call; they must substantiate the claim with reasoning, just as they would with any other argument. The Opposition carries the burden of proving the validity of the Call, while the Government can refute the Call. Calls must be introduced in the Opposition's first substantive speech, but can be further substantiated or abandoned in later speeches. After introducing or substantiating a Call, Opposition speakers should continue debating the prepared motion charitably.

4.4.1 Specialised Knowledge Call

‘Specialised Knowledge’ in debate refers to information or expertise that is not expected to be known by the ARCV. For instance, while the ARCV knows that Syria is in the Middle East, they are not expected to know the details of Syria’s constitution. A ‘Specialised Knowledge Call’ (“Spec Call”) is a challenge raised by the Opposition team claiming that the Government’s prepared case relies on Specialized Knowledge not available to the ARCV. A Spec Call is evaluated based on the overall context, considering the wording and intent of the motion, the infoslides, and the arguments put forward by the Government team. The presence of an infoslides does not eliminate the possibility of a Spec Call. As well, a successful Spec Call does not automatically result in a loss for the Government. Instead, it prompts the judges to evaluate two key factors: (1) How inaccessible the prepared motion was to the Opposition according to what is expected of the ARCV, and (2) The extent to which the Government team's arguments depended on Specialised Knowledge. Highly technical topics (i.e., “Intel processors are superior to AMD processors”) and topics that cannot be abstracted from their subject matter (i.e., “The Godfather 1 was better than The Godfather 2”) are presumptively too specialised. If the prepared motion is deemed too inaccessible or the Government’s arguments collapse when Specialized Knowledge is removed, the debate may be decided in favour of the Opposition.



As previously stated, Specific Knowledge Calls may not be asserted - there is a burden of proof on the Opposition to prove that a case or argument relies on specific knowledge. The level of explanation may be as simple as explaining what the ARCV may be expected to know. However, the more explanation Opposition offers as to the level of Specific Knowledge required and the importance of such knowledge to Government's arguments, the more likely they are to succeed in the Panel's evaluation.

4.4.2 Tight Call


A 'Tight Call' is a challenge raised by the Opposition team claiming that the prepared motion is inherently unfair or heavily skewed in favour of the Government. The Opposition can only call the structure of a motion and info slide tight, not individual arguments (although the strength of individual arguments can be used to prove a Tight Call). The following would make a prepared case tight:

1. The motion is a truism (e.g., "The world is not flat") or a tautology (e.g., "All bachelors are unmarried men").
2. Motion wording or info slide contextualization is skewed to build-in advantages such that the Government's case is stronger than the Opposition's (e.g., "You are the Chinese Communist Party. Your Primary interest is acquiring soft power in Africa. TH, as China, would invest heavily in Africa." This may include forcing Opposition to create a large countermodel when Government does not have to.
3. The government's best arguments are always meaningfully truer and more impactful than the Opposition's best arguments according to the ARCV, even when an Opposition could have presented their case flawlessly.
4. The info slide is too long, overly complex, or reliant on jargon to be reasonably understood in a short period (see Section 3.2).

Motions are often skewed slightly in one direction or the other, and it is up to the Opposition to prove that the imbalance meaningfully impacts the fairness of the debate. Just because arguments are difficult to find does not mean a motion is tight—Government is allowed to challenge their opponents to think. If the Opposition team successfully proves that the motion is tight, the debate must be decided in their favour. This should be treated like any other aspect of the debate, with the Opposition proving that the tight call is true and that it is significant to the debate, and the Panel should evaluate the debate over tightness as if it were any other aspect of the debate, without adding their own lines of argumentation.

4.6 Points of Information

A Point of Information ("POI") is a formalised interjection from any speaker on the opposite side to the speaker who has the floor. A POI may last up to 15 seconds. The first and last minute of each speech is known as 'protected time,' during which no POIs may be offered to the speaker who is making their speech. All minutes of a Reply speech constitute protected time, including the Reply portion of a Traditional Opposition second speech. Because Canadian Parliamentary



is a two-team format, not taking POIs should generally be seen as a noticeable failure to engage with the other team. Judges may consider a speaker's refusal to accept or offer POIs when determining speaker scores. Other applicable rules, customs, and adjudication norms of POIs and Points of Clarification (“POC”) are available in Section 1.4, “Points of Information,” and 2.10, “Points of Information,” of the WUDC Manual.

4.7 Judging

Following the debate, the judging panel will retire for deliberation. The panel should come to a ‘call,’ a determination of a winner and loser. Once the call is reached, the panel should submit their result and deliver a ‘Reason For Decision’ (“RFD”) if applicable. Judges should follow the adjudication processes outlined in Section 1.6, “Breaches of Order,” Section 3.1, “Deciding the results,” Section 3.2, “Managing the deliberation,” Section 3.3, “Filing in the ballot,” Section 3.4, “Announcing the result,” Section 3.5, “Feedback on Adjudication,” and Section 3.6, “Some pitfalls to avoid in decision-making and feedback” of the WUDC Manual.

Symmetrical arguments should be credited to the Blind Opposition, although they may be given less weight compared to asymmetrical arguments that have a clear winner. This is because a Blind Opposition is disadvantaged by having no preparation time. In straight motion debates, this presumption is not applicable. However, there is no such thing as a symmetrical or “even” round of debate overall, and the team that is ultimately more persuasive must be awarded the victory. There are no “ties” in debate nor are there automatic victories.

5.0 Before the Debate

Due to the use of prepared cases, Canadian Parliamentary debate follows distinct procedures leading up to each debate round. For rules that apply before a debate, refer to the WUDC Manual.

5.1 Straight Motion Announcement

The Adjudication Core will announce the straight motion for each round of debates, along with the ‘draw’ (showing all the rooms in the tournament and the positions in which each team in the competition will be debating in each room) to all participants 15 minutes before the debates begin. If debaters are uncertain about the literal meaning of a motion, they may ask a member of the Adjudication Core to define it for them.

5.2 Preparation Time

Judges should call debaters into the debate room 15 minutes after the motion is announced. During these 15 minutes, the Opposition teams should prepare their case for the straight motion, while the Government teams can also prepare for the straight motion if they choose not to use a prepared case.

5.3 Government Motion Declaration

Following the conclusion of preparation time, the Chair of the round will call the room to order. The Chair should ask the Government whether they wish to proceed with the straight motion or present a prepared case. The Government's choice will determine which set of procedures outlined in Section 4.4 or Section 4.5 will be followed to start the round. The Government team is not required to provide prior warning to the Opposition during preparation time as to whether they will run the straight motion or a prepared case.

5.4 Round Start - Straight Motion

Under the condition that a Government team chooses to run the straight motion, the Opposition team should be afforded an opt-out opportunity pursuant to the equity policies of the given tournament. Once a Government team declares a straight motion, the round should commence.

5.5 Round Start - Prepared Case

If the Government team decides to present a prepared case, the sequence of events is as follows: (1) It is clarified whether the motion is 'Opposition Choice,' (2) The motion and infoslides are announced to the judges and the Opposition, (3) A 1-minute clarification period is provided, (4) If the motion is 'Opposition Choice,' the Opposition has up to 30 seconds to decide which side they will take. The Opposition team should be afforded an opt-out opportunity pursuant to the tournament's equity policies once the motion and infoslides are announced.

5.5.1 Opposition Choice

Opposition Choice ("Opp Choice") is when the Government team presents the Opposition team with the option to choose which side of the prepared motion they wish to argue. This choice does not affect the speaker positions or the burdens of proof; it simply allows the Opposition to flip the wording of the motion if they prefer to argue the opposite side. To flip the motion, teams and judges should imagine adding the word "not" to the appropriate part of the motion, effectively reversing its stance. For example, if the Opposition chooses to defend the Government side of the motion "This House would ban zoos," the motion should be rephrased as "This House would NOT ban zoos," while keeping the speaking order and sides the same. Opposition Choice is an optional tool for Government. The Chair should invite the Government team to disclose whether the motion is Opp Choice before the motion is announced. Following the clarification period, the Opposition may discuss the motion for up to 30 seconds before choosing their side.

5.5.2 Clarification Period

A clarification period is a designated 1 minute period when the Opposition team can ask the Government team questions to clarify details about the motion and infoslides. The Government team's answers will be taken as if they were information presented in the infoslides. Therefore,

the answers provided during the clarification period can contribute to the assessment of whether a motion should be subject to a Tight Call or Spec Call. The Opposition team is permitted to ask questions to clarify both the literal meaning of the motion and the context from the motion and infoslides, offering them more flexibility than what is typically allowed with straight motion clarifications. The Government team has the option to decline to answer or indicate that a particular answer is "within the debate," meaning it should be argued and determined during the round. The Opposition is always allotted a full 1 minute timed by the Chair, whether or not they choose to ask any question, but may be silenced by the Chair if they are simply using the period to prepare arguments. The Prime Minister's speech begins immediately after the clarification period ends.

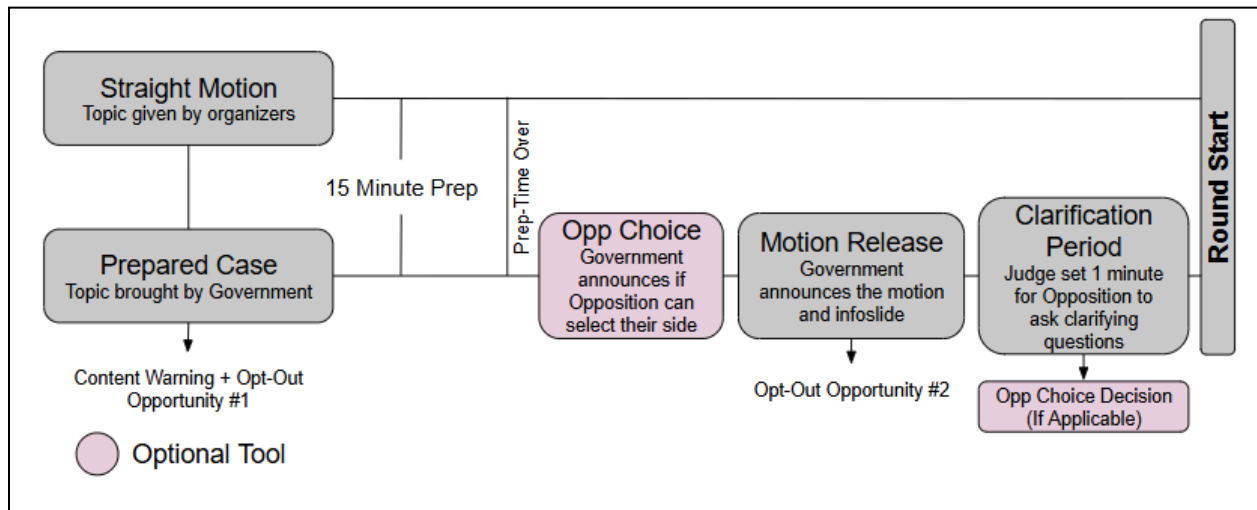


Exhibit 4: Round Start Chart