



Toronto Debating Society

www.debating.ca

The Toronto Debating Society is a non-profit public community organization; the first and oldest non-university debating club in Toronto.

Welcome to the Toronto Debating Society

- Debating will help you refine your persuasive speaking skills - a talent that will benefit other aspects of your life.
- As members of the Toronto Debating Society, we enjoy refining our persuasive speaking skills and guests enjoy watching our entertaining, lively and heated debates on a variety of topics.

Participation

- As a member, you will have the added benefit of participating in the debate itself or any number of supporting roles.
- We foster an environment of fun and comradery! Members can participate to any degree they wish. The annual membership fee is \$65. (\$35 students)

Motion / Resolution

- The Toronto Debating society follows *parliamentary* debate procedures. This means that we pretend we are in a house of commons where the side in favor of the motion is the "government."
- The question at hand in a debate is a "motion" or "resolution." For example, "*be it resolved that Canadians should drive on the left.*"
- It is the role of the government to define the terms in the resolution which *require interpretation*. For example, does "Canadians" mean only Canadian citizens? Or would it be anyone driving in Canada?
 - If the government fails to define something, it could leave the door open to the opposition.

Persuasive Arguments

A persuasive debater's arguments will be:

- Relevant to the issues of the debate; on message and not caught up in unnecessary detail or irrelevant tangents.
- Developed logically. This is in order to be clear and well reasoned; therefore plausible. The conclusion of all arguments should support the member's case.

- Consistent across all subject matter. Debaters should ensure their arguments are not contradictory and are compatible with their teammate.

The Prime Minister (PM)

- The PM works with their teammate to define the terms of the resolution and introduces the main arguments and supporting evidence in favor of it.
- The case is made up of arguments to further his/her case to persuade the audience and the adjudicator of his/her point of view.

Leader of the Opposition (LO)

- The LO refutes the case presented by the Government and presents arguments and evidence to support their own position.
- The government's case may be refuted through a combination of:
 - **Evidence:** cast doubt on the validity of the Government's supporting examples;
 - **Argument:** the *thrust* of the case itself by presenting contrasting examples of his/her own; or
 - **Premise:** the philosophical foundation upon which the case is built.

Member of the Government (MG)

- The MG must refute the arguments brought forward by the LO, which again may be argued at the level of evidence, argument or premise.
- Elements used in this refutation must be consistent with the rest of the Government's case.
- The bulk of the MG's speech should be devoted to expanding the case presented by the PM.

Member of the Opposition (MO)

- The MO must refute the government's case and further develop the arguments put forward by the LO.
- As before, elements used in this refutation must be consistent with the rest of the Opposition's case.

Victory / Scoring

- The Adjudicator will score a debate based on five key elements: **argument, content** (evidence), **rebuttal/refutation, style & rhetoric**, and **teamwork**.
- Audience members should vote for the most persuasive team regardless of their personal opinions on the topic. "Who won the debate?"
- It is quite possible to retain the support of the popular opinion and yet still "lose the debate" in the eyes of the adjudicator.



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Membership Form

We are run by members, for members. Membership fees defray council chamber rental fees and other organization expenses.

Guests and audience members are always welcome. However, if you would like to participate in a debate, members enjoy the added benefit of signing up for any role (Speaker, Government, Opposition, and Adjudicator) for any of the motions scheduled for the season.

Name : _____
Address : _____ Apartment # : _____
City : _____ Postal Code : _____
Daytime Phone : _____
Evening Phone : _____
E-Mail : _____
Image : Our debates are filmed for archival and educational purposes. If you wish to opt-out of your image being used by the Toronto Debating Society, please check the following box. Note: you can always opt-out at a later time on a per-debate basis.
 Non-permission / opt-out

Renewing members may skip the following section...

How did you find out about us? _____
Occupation _____
Main speaking interest _____
Current Speaking Level None Basic Intermediate Competent Professional
Have you been associated with a speaking society before? Yes No
If so, which one? _____

Annual Membership Fee: Standard: \$65.00 | Student: \$35.00

The Toronto Debating Society will accept cash or cheques made payable to our treasurer,

Amount: _____ Received by: _____ Date: _____.