
6. OPPOSITION DAYS



What is an Opposition Day ?

Opposition Days are an invaluable parliamentary mechanism that helps maintain the government's accountability to the people of Canada. Many of the motions made on Opposition Days are voted on, which means they are confidence motions.

Each Bureau has designated a person to coordinate preparations for your sector in the event that an Opposition Day motion concerns your activities. This network of persons is essential for preparing for Opposition Days and the members of the network must be available on the eve of an Opposition Day to prepare any material required for the Ministers.

As a rule, 21 days per fiscal year are set aside for Opposition Days. It is up to the government to designate the days set aside for supply motions. Generally, the Government House Leader will rise on Thursday at 3 p.m., after Question Period, to announce the day that has been selected as an Opposition Day the following week.

Motions may deal with any matter falling within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada, and the choice of questions to be debated is left up to the opposition parties.

Motions must be submitted the day before Opposition Day, prior to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and prior to 2 p.m. Friday for debates to be held the following Monday.

The debates take place during periods allotted for "Government Orders" and are approximately six hours in length, if held on a Monday, Tuesday or Thursday. However, if the government decides that an Opposition Day will be held on a Wednesday or Friday, the debates are generally only one and a half to two hours in length.

The opposition MP who tables the motion is generally the first to address the House, presenting his or her party's position on the topic of debate in a twenty-minute speech. Each party then follows suit.

The rule is that each party in turn has a total of thirty minutes, but that addresses should be no longer than twenty minutes, to allow ten minutes for questions and comments. Often, two MPs from the same party will share the 20 minutes, each speaking for about ten minutes.