



Fact Sheet No. 15

THRONE SPEECH AND DEBATE

When is the Throne Speech held?

Every new session of the Legislature begins with the reading by the Lieutenant Governor of the Speech from the Throne.

What is the Speech from the Throne?

The Speech is written by the Government and is a summary of recent achievements, a statement of government policies and policy proposals, and an outline of the legislative program to be introduced into the Assembly. Typically, invited guests and dignitaries attend the reading of the Throne Speech, and for this one event only, are permitted to sit in guest seating areas on the floor of the Legislative Chamber and in the Chamber Loges.

What is the Debate on the Address in Reply?

The Debate on the Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne or the Throne Speech debate, as it is commonly referred to, is usually the principal business of the House for the six sitting days following the opening day. On the day after the Throne Speech has been read by the Lieutenant Governor, a motion called the Address in Reply, is moved in the House. This motion gives thanks to the Lieutenant Governor for the Throne Speech, and the motion also serves as the vehicle for debating the contents of the Throne Speech. The debate on this motion takes precedence over all other House business, with the exception of Routine Proceedings.

What are the traditions associated with the Throne Speech debate?

By tradition, the mover and the seconder of the motion for an Address in reply are new Members from the government side of the Chamber. Also by tradition, the Leader of the Official Opposition either adjourns the debate after the mover and seconder have spoken, or else speaks immediately in the debate after the mover and seconder have spoken. The Leader of the Official Opposition is also traditionally the third participant in the debate and moves an amendment expressing non-confidence in the government.

During the Throne Speech debate, the rules regarding relevancy in debate are relaxed, permitting MLAs to address almost any topic of concern to them to their constituents, but the usual time limit on speeches applies. While speaking in this debate, Members often offer congratulations, give thanks, talk about their backgrounds, describe their constituencies, and then proceed to discuss why they are or are not in favour of the contents of the Throne Speech.

New Members are often treated with extra courtesy when speaking in this debate, as this is usually the first time that the Member is speaking in the House. Heckling is generally kept to a minimum on this occasion.

How long does the Throne Speech debate last?

The Address in Reply can be debated for up to six sitting days. [Rule 46] This time period also includes any amendments or sub-amendments that may be moved. Each day, the Order Paper lists which day of debate it is.

The Government House Leader may interrupt the debate on as many as two sitting days to call government business.

What is the Speaking Time Limit?

Members can speak for up to 20 minutes in the debate but this time limit does not apply to the Leader of the Government or to Leaders of Recognized Opposition Parties.

When are the votes held?

The votes on any sub-amendment, amendment and the main motion are held at 30 minutes prior to the adjournment of the House on the sixth day of debate. [Rule 48(3)]