



TIME ALLOCATION

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Time allocation establishes a limit on the time for debate on an item of Government Business. Only the government can propose time allocation, and only for its own business.¹ Time allocation does not bring debate to an immediate close; rather it provides a means for the government to propose to the Senate that a decision be taken on a particular stage of an item of its business within a determined period of time. Time allocation is primarily used to limit time spent on government bills, although it can also be applied to motions and other items of Government Business on the Order Paper. Rules providing for time allocation were introduced in the Senate in 1991.

PROCESS OF TIME ALLOCATION

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTIES AND GROUPS²

Before the government can implement time allocation on one of its items before the Senate, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government must first seek an agreement with the recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups. If an agreement is reached, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government will advise the Senate of the agreement and its terms. Such agreements have generally stated the time and date by which debate on a particular stage of a bill is to terminate, rather than specifying the number of hours to be taken for the remainder of the debate. The Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government can then move a motion outlining the terms of the agreement for adoption by the Senate.³ The motion is voted on immediately, without debate or amendment.⁴

FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT⁵

If the government and the recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups fail to reach agreement on the amount of time to be spent on a particular stage of an adjourned item of Government Business, the Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government may announce this fact at any time during a sitting of the Senate. A notice of motion

may then be given in which the government indicates the number of hours or days of debate to be allotted to that particular stage of the item.⁶

Unlike the case where there is agreement between the government and the recognized parties and the recognized parliamentary groups to allocate time, when there is no agreement, the motion to allot time can only apply to one stage of debate on an item.⁷

The minimum time to be provided for any stage of debate under time allocation varies with the nature of the item under debate.⁸ For a substantive motion or for the second reading of a bill, at least six more hours must be provided. For a committee to report back to the Senate, at least one day, during the period from Monday to Friday, must be provided. For the consideration of a report on a bill and third reading stage of the bill, a single period of at least six more hours must be provided. The six-hour minimum required for motions and bills has been the usual amount of time provided for in time allocation motions.

DEBATE ON TIME ALLOCATION MOTION⁹

When there is no agreement between the government and the recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups to allocate time on an item, time allocation cannot be implemented on that item until the Senate adopts the time allocation motion. The motion is debated under Government Business, and debate cannot be adjourned. The motion cannot be amended, nor may any other motion be proposed except that a senator be now heard. Time for debate on the motion is limited to a maximum of two and one-half hours, after which the Speaker must put the motion to a vote. If a standing vote is requested, it cannot be deferred, and the bells will ring for a maximum of one hour. During the debate on the motion to allocate time, a senator may only speak once and for a maximum of 10 minutes. However, the Leader or Representative of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader or facilitator of any other recognized party or recognized parliamentary group may each speak for up to 20 minutes. If the time allocation motion is adopted, its terms will govern debate the next time the item subject to time allocation is called.

DEBATE AND VOTE ON ITEM UNDER TIME ALLOCATION¹⁰

Once debate has begun on a time allocated item, it cannot be adjourned. No amendments or other motions can be moved, except that a senator be now heard. During the debate, the rules respecting the ordinary time of daily adjournment and the suspension of the sitting at 7 p.m. are not applied. Instead, the debate continues until it either concludes or until the time provided expires. Once the allotted time has expired or the debate is concluded, the Speaker puts the question to a vote immediately. If debate ends before 5:15 p.m. and a standing vote is requested, it is held at 5:30 p.m. the same day, with a 15-minute bell.¹¹ If the debate ends between 5:15 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., the vote takes place after a 15-minute bell.¹² Finally, if debate ends after 5:30 p.m., the vote is automatically deferred to 5:30 p.m. the next day, with a 15-minute bell.¹³ If the vote falls on a Friday, the Government Whip or Liaison can defer it to 5:30 p.m. on the next sitting day thereafter.¹⁴

INTERRUPTIONS ALLOWED DURING TIME ALLOCATED DEBATE

The only interruptions permitted during the debate on an item under time allocation are for the taking of a deferred standing vote, for the consideration of a question or case of privilege, and for holding an emergency debate. After dealing with such business, the Senate will immediately resume consideration of the item subject to time allocation until the time provided has expired.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TIME ALLOCATION

[Senate Procedure in Practice](#) (Chapter 10)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OTHER POINTS COVERED IN THIS NOTE

[Senate Procedural Note No. 3, Debate](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 4, Voting](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 5, Legislative Process](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 9, The Speaker of the Senate](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 15, Supply Process](#)

References

¹ Rules 7-1(1) and 7-2(1).

² Rule 7-1.

³ Rule 7-1(2).

⁴ Rule 7-1(3).

⁵ Rules 7-2, 7-3 and 7-4.

⁶ Rule 7-2.

⁷ Rule 7-2(4). The one exception is that the motion can cover both the report and third reading stages of a bill (rule 7-2(5)(c)).

⁸ Rule 7-2(5).

⁹ Rule 7-3.

¹⁰ Rule 7-4.

¹¹ Rules 7-4(5)(a) and 9-6.

¹² Rule 7-4(5)(b).

¹³ Rules 7-4(5)(c) and 9-6.

¹⁴ Rule 7-4(5)(d).