

Table of Precedence

Who speaks first when a number of dignitaries are present at a ceremony?

To determine the speaking order at an event a variety of tools can be used. One of those is the Table of Precedence - the established order of people for official functions and events. Although the basic order has been long established, the Table of Precedence evolves over time to incorporate the recognition of more diverse groups in our society.

Normally speeches are given in ascending order, with the most important dignitary (according to the order of precedence established) being the last to speak. The ribbon cutting, unveiling of a plaque or model, opening of a building or inauguration of a factory normally comes at the end of the series of speeches and momentum is created by the speeches by the representatives of various participants, in order of their relative importance. If the program for the ceremony or activity places the important moment at the very beginning, the speeches would then be given in descending order, with the most important dignitary being the first to speak.

For an event hosted by the Government of British Columbia, speaking order is determined by [B.C.'s Office of Protocol](#), with some variation depending upon the specific speakers. For assistance in determining order of speakers, please [contact us](#).