

Introduction

- 1.1 Early in the 44th Parliament, the Committee resolved to adopt the wide-ranging reference 'the maintenance of standing and sessional orders'. This inquiry, generally adopted each parliament, allows the Committee to fulfil its procedural monitoring role. The inquiry allows the Committee to identify any issues, irregularities or problems with the standing orders and propose adjustments or improvements.
- 1.2 In the 43rd Parliament, the Committee produced a series of reports monitoring the review of the procedural changes made in response to the requirements of the hung parliament. Those reports and the Committee's final report on the maintenance of the standing and sessional orders informed a number of the changes put in place in the 44th Parliament.¹
- 1.3 House standing orders were amended and reformed to suit the context of the hung parliament, and then in response to the events and experience of that parliament. It has been a long period of turbulence and change for the House and there have been some procedures adopted that do not necessarily meet the needs of the House as well as they could.
- 1.4 This report challenges some arrangements that give the Executive more control over the business and proceedings of the House than has been customary or can be justified by the Government's legitimate need to control its agenda. Excessive Executive dominance raises concerns about the erosion of the rights of Members, the separation of powers and the authority of the House over its own affairs.
- 1.5 Elements of this report seek to reassert the distinction between the House and the Executive. Further, it examines the reforms put in place in the

¹ *Interim report: Monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament*, April 2011; *Monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament: 4th Report*, November 2012; *Maintenance of the standing and sessional orders*, June 2013.

House of Commons committee system, and considers whether these reforms could be applied to the House of Representatives.

Conduct of the inquiry and structure of the report

- 1.6 Due to the possibility of an earlier than anticipated election, the Committee chose not to call for submissions to this inquiry. The Committee felt that it was imperative that the procedural issues it has identified over the 44th Parliament be put on the record so that they may be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 1.7 Chapter 2 considers key changes to the scheduling of private members business and the election of chairs and deputy chairs of House committees. It considers the successful reforms that the House of Commons has undertaken in these areas and proposes that the House undertake similar reforms.
- 1.8 Chapter 3 addresses technical amendments to improve the standing orders and puts forward some further matters to provoke thought and discussion for possible future consideration and adoption by the House.