



## **Appendix C – Committee information**

[information sent to Parliaments about the Standing Committee on Procedure]

### **1 Procedure Committee**

- Role
- History
- Major achievements
- Recent inquiries
- Current inquiry
- Ongoing interests

### **2 Similar House of Commons committees**

- Modernisation Committee
- Procedure Committee

#### **Role**

To inquire into and report on the practices and procedures of the House and its committees. (SO 221)

7 members (4 government; 3 non-government)

#### **History**

First established 27 February 1985. Replaced Standing Orders Committee. Joint Committee on Parliamentary Committee System found in 1976 that the standing orders committees in both Houses were too top-heavy with ex officio appointments (Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition) to find time to achieve results.

Because of the Constitution (sections 49, 50) and because 60 out of 75 original Members had served in colonial legislatures, many of the powers, privileges, practices and procedures were passed on from the House of Commons. During its first half century, procedural reform in the House of Representatives was slow. Temporary standing orders adopted in 1901 were not replaced by permanent standing orders until 1950.

Before the Procedure Committee, the focus of procedural change was on streamlining the operation of government business: gag (1905); speech time limits (1912), guillotine (1918); permanent SOs (1950); new financial procedures (1963).

The Procedure Committee has broadened the scope of procedural reform to include greater opportunities for private Members; the operations of committees and community involvement.

### **Major achievements**

A comprehensive regime for arranging private Members' business and the consideration of committee and delegation reports (1989).

Establishment of the Main Committee as a parallel debating Chamber to streamline the legislative workload and provide opportunities for private Members (1994).

Measures to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the House to the public through media and other channels (2001).

Complete redrafting and reorganisation of the standing orders (2004).

### **Recent inquiries**

*Maintenance of the standing and sessional orders part 1: speeches at the election of Speaker and time of presentation of Explanatory Memorandums* [presented 27 March 2006].

*Procedures relating to House committees* including: arrangements for presenting reports; time allocated to committee work in the House and Main Committee; and attendance at committee meetings by visitors [presented 5 December 2005].

*A History of the Committee on its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary* [presented 28 November 2005].

*All aspects of media coverage of the House* (including proceedings in the House, the Main Committee and committees of the House) [presented 10 October 2005].

*The application of the standing orders on the anticipation rule [presented 14 March 2005].*

**Current inquiry**

Maintenance of the standing and sessional orders including review of sessional orders:

Main Committee meetings on Mondays to consider committee and delegation reports

Order in the Main Committee

Times for Members' statements and adjournment debates in the Main Committee

Times for debates on dissent motions

**Ongoing interests include**

Improving the status and operations of the Main Committee

Voting procedures

Opportunities for private members

Improving opportunities for scrutinising legislation

Conduct in the House especially at question time

Arrangements for opening of parliament