

STANDING ORDERS

Three sets of laws and rules determine how Parliament works: the Constitution, the standing orders and conventions established in previous parliaments. While the Constitution refers to both the House of Representatives and the Senate, each House has its own standing orders, and its own conventions and traditions.

Standing orders is the rule book for the daily running of Parliament. The Constitution (Section 50) gives to the members of each House the power to establish and change their own standing orders. A committee of the House of Representatives revised and up-dated the standing orders of that chamber in 2004.

Standing orders refers to such things as:

- how the Speaker and the President are elected
- debating rules
- what is disorderly behaviour by Members and Senators, and
- how votes are organised.

One example of a standing order is number 97 which says:

97 Daily Question Time

(a) Question Time shall begin at 2 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, at which time the Speaker shall interrupt any business before the House and call on questions without notice.

If members or senators wish to disagree with how the Speaker or the President is running a debate or making a decision, they can stand up and draw a specific standing order to the attention of the person in the chair. The chair then has to interpret the point of order, sometimes with the assistance of the Clerk, who has a detailed knowledge of the standing orders.

Standing orders change over time. The Parliament can vote to change any standing order. The House of Representatives recently made a thorough revision of its standing orders in which it changed the language, the rules themselves and the way the rules are organised.