

PRESS STATEMENT
REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

1. The Standing Orders Committee, a standing select committee of Parliament, met on 22 March and 6 April 2017. Its report was presented to Parliament on 25 April 2017. The Report of the Standing Orders Committee (Parl. 6 of 2017) is attached. The Committee made a number of recommendations relating to:

- (a) the 2016 constitutional amendments to the Elected Presidency;
- (b) Bill procedure;
- (c) petitions to Parliament; and
- (d) other areas of parliamentary procedure.

Procedures relating to the Elected President's powers

2. There should be procedures for Parliament to be kept informed if the President fails to exercise his custodial powers on a measure passed by Parliament within the time limits prescribed by the Constitution. Such measures include Supply Bills and resolutions on certain guarantees and loans. Under the Constitution, if the President fails to make a decision within the prescribed time limit, he is deemed to have agreed with the proposed measure.

3. Procedural machinery should be put in place to give effect to Parliament's power to overrule a Presidential veto that was made contrary to the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisers. The President's grounds and the Council's recommendation should be made available to Parliament at least 2 clear days before a motion is moved to overrule the President. The Speaker should be satisfied that the President's decision was in fact contrary to the Council's recommendation, before a motion to overrule the President can be moved. A motion to overrule the President should be decided on a yes-or-no basis, with no amendments allowed.

Bill procedure

4. The minimum interval between the introduction of a Bill and its second reading debate should be increased from 7 clear days to 10 clear days. The notice period for an amendment should be increased from 2 clear days to 4 clear days. This will give Parliament more time to consider Bills and amendments.

5. The second reading of a Supply Bill should proceed immediately after proceedings in the Committee of Supply are completed, since the heads of expenditure in the Supply Bill would have been considered in the Committee of Supply debates.

Petitions

6. If a petition to Parliament concerns a Bill or motion that is before Parliament, Parliament should be able to consider the petition together with the Bill or motion, instead of sending the Petition to the Public Petitions Committee. This will prevent a situation where a petition is considered only after it is moot.

Other changes

7. MPs whose questions have not been answered by the end of Question Time should be required to indicate within one hour whether they wish to postpone or withdraw their questions. This will facilitate the circulation of written answers to MPs who choose not to postpone or withdraw their questions.
8. MPs may choose to record an abstention in a voice vote. Previously only dissents were allowed to be recorded.
9. Office-holders may, with the Speaker's leave, circulate a written statement to correct any factual error they make in a Parliamentary speech. This will ensure that the correct facts on key issues and policies are swiftly placed on the public record.
10. The Speaker should be given the power to direct reprints of the Standing Orders. This will facilitate updates to the Standing Orders.
11. Other changes were recommended to ensure that Parliamentary business can be conducted in an orderly and efficient manner.

RESPONSES

12. Statement by Mdm Halimah Yacob, Speaker of Parliament and Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee:

“Parliamentary procedures enable our Members to perform their parliamentary roles effectively and facilitates the efficient and orderly conduct of parliamentary proceedings. We periodically review our Standing Orders to ensure it is updated and continue to meet the needs of Members. I thank all the Members of the Committee for their contributions and the backbenchers who submitted suggestions for consideration by the Committee.”

13. Statement by Ms. Grace Fu, Leader of the House, and Mr. Chan Chun Sing, Government Whip:

“The Government thanks the Standing Orders Committee for its work. The Committee's recommendations put the procedures in place to give effect to the 2016 constitutional amendments to the Elected Presidency. The recommendations also make a number of improvements to parliamentary procedure. The Government will move a motion at the May sitting of Parliament to adopt the Committee's recommendations.”

Office of the Clerk of Parliament
25 April 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE

First Session

REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Parl. 6 of 2017

Presented to Parliament:

25 April 2017

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Members

Mdm. Speaker (Mdm. Halimah Yacob)
Chairman (*ex officio*)

Mr. Charles Chong
Deputy Speaker (*ex officio*)

Mr. Lim Biow Chuan
Deputy Speaker (*ex officio*)

Mr. Chan Chun Sing
Minister, Prime Minister's Office and Government Whip

Mr. Desmond Choo

Ms. Grace Fu Hai Yien
Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Leader of the House

Ms. Joan Pereira

Mr. Png Eng Huat

Ms. Rahayu Mahzam

Mr. Patrick Tay Teck Guan

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REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

The Standing Orders Committee, constituted under the provisions of paragraph (4)(a) of Standing Order No. 100 [*Standing Select Committees*], has agreed to the following Report:

1 On 20 February 2017, Parliament passed the following resolution moved by the Leader of the House:

“That the Standing Orders Committee appointed under paragraph (4)(a) of Standing Order No. 100 do consider and report on such amendments to the Standing Orders of Parliament which the Committee may deem necessary.”

2 The Leader of the House also invited Members to submit any suggestions for amending the Standing Orders to the Clerk by 17 March 2017. Submissions were made by Mr. Louis Ng and Mr. Kok Heng Leun. The Committee thanks the two Members for their submissions.

3 The Committee met on 22 March 2017 and 6 April 2017.

4 Pursuant to the resolution of Parliament, the Committee recommends that the amendments proposed by the Government and set out in Appendix I to this Report be made to the present Standing Orders of Parliament. The amendments comprise (a) substantive amendments, including amendments consequential to the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Act 2016; and (b) miscellaneous and consequential amendments.

5 The Committee also considered the suggestions made by Mr. Ng and Mr. Kok. The Committee’s response to those suggestions is set out in Appendix II to this Report.

**AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS
RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE**

Struck-through words to be deleted
Underlined words to be inserted

Substantive Amendments

1. Standing Order No. 10 (Order of business)

(1A) The Speaker may vary the regular order of business for any sitting day, except where Parliament has made a decision under paragraph (2) of this Standing Order. A variation of the regular order of business under this paragraph for a sitting day must be indicated on the Order Paper for that sitting day.

(2) Parliament may, upon a motion which may be made without notice and shall take precedence over all other business, decide to proceed to any particular business out of the regular order or the order as varied by the Speaker under paragraph (1A) of this Standing Order.

Remarks:

The first amendment empowers the Speaker to vary the regular order of business set out in S.O. No. 10(1), provided that the variation is published in the Order Paper.

The second amendment provides for Parliament to further vary the order of business varied by the Speaker.

2. Standing Order No. 18 (Petitions)

(3) Immediately following the presentation of the brief statement, the Petition shall be handed by the Member to the Clerk at the Table. Petitions shall be ordered to lie upon the Table without question put. ~~Every such Petition shall stand referred to the Public Petitions Committee, unless it is a Petition against a private or hybrid Bill, in which case it shall stand referred to the Select Committee on the Bill.~~

...

(6) After a Petition is presented to Parliament under this Standing Order, it shall stand referred to the Public Petitions Committee, unless it is a Petition against a private or hybrid Bill, in which case it shall stand referred to the Select Committee on the Bill.

Provided that if the Speaker is satisfied that a Petition touches upon a motion or Bill before Parliament, he may permit a motion to be moved without notice for the Petition to be considered together with the motion before Parliament or at a specified stage of the Bill before Parliament, as the case may be. A motion moved under this proviso shall be decided upon without amendment or debate and, if the motion is agreed to, the Petition shall be considered according to the motion and shall not be referred to the Public Petitions Committee.

Current Practice

Under S.O. No. 18(3), a Petition must generally be referred to the Public Petitions Committee. This may result in a Petition relating to a motion or Bill before Parliament being considered only after Parliament has dealt with the Bill or other matter, by which time the Petition may be moot.

Remarks:

This amendment allows a Petition to be considered together with a motion or Bill before Parliament to which it relates, if Parliament so decides.

3. Standing Order No. 22 (Manner of asking and answering questions)

22.—(1) Questions for Oral Answer shall be raised at the time appointed by Standing Order No. 10 [*Order of business*] (hereinafter referred to as “Question Time”) and may continue for up to one and a half hours ~~from the commencement of a sitting~~:

...

(3) If a Member asking a question for an oral answer fails to rise and ask his question, then any other Member may make the question his own and may rise in his place and ask the question in the manner prescribed above; but if no other Member so rises, or if a question is not fully answered or not reached by the end of Question Time, the Minister or other Member to whom the question is addressed shall send copies of the answer to the Member who asked it and to the Clerk, who shall cause that answer to be circulated to Members and to be printed in the Official Report:

Provided that at any time within one hour after the end of Question Time, prior to the termination of the sitting, the Member who asked the question standing in his name may signify in writing to the Clerk his desire to postpone the question to a later sitting day or may withdraw it.

Remarks:

The amendment to paragraph (1) of S.O. No. 22 reflects the fact that Question Time may not start at the commencement of a sitting.

The amendment to paragraph (3) of S.O. No. 22 provides for a Member whose question for oral answer has not been asked, reached or fully answered at the end of Question Time to indicate within an hour whether he wishes to postpone the question or withdraw it. This is to facilitate the expeditious circulation of written answers to Members who did not choose to postpone or withdraw their questions.

4. Standing Order No. 29 (Official reports)

(5) A Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary may, with the leave of the Speaker, make a written statement to correct any factual error made by him in a speech (including an answer to a question for oral answer). The statement must be confined to a statement of the factual error and the correct facts, and must not include any explanation or opinion or any new information that is not necessary to correct the factual error. The Speaker’s leave must be sought within seventy-two hours from the

time the first copy of the report of the speech was despatched to the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary. A draft of a proposed statement must be submitted to the Speaker when his leave is sought. If Speaker grants leave, the statement shall be circulated to Members and published in the Official Report.

Remarks:

This amendment allows Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries to quickly correct any factual error made in a speech, through a written statement. The Speaker's leave must be sought to make the statement, and if leave is granted the statement will be circulated to Members and published in the Official Report.

5. New Standing Order (A) – (to be inserted immediately after SO 44)

Motions to overrule the President

(1) The grounds of a decision of the President must be published in the *Gazette*, and the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisers in relation to the President's decision must be presented to Parliament, at least 2 clear days before a motion is moved to overrule a decision of the President.

(2) The Speaker shall not allow a motion to overrule a decision of the President to be moved unless he is satisfied that the decision of the President sought to be overruled was made contrary to the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisers.

(3) A Minister, when giving notice of a motion to overrule a decision of the President, shall state whether the President's decision is one which can be overruled only if a request has been made to the Cabinet in accordance with the law. If such a request is necessary for the decision to be overruled, the Minister shall, before moving the motion, signify to Parliament whether such a request has been made. If the Minister does not signify to Parliament that such a request has been made, the Speaker shall not allow the motion to be moved.

(4) A motion to overrule the President shall be in the form: “That Parliament, pursuant to Article 37IF of the Constitution, overrules [*state the particulars of the decision of the President that is sought to be overruled*].”

(5) A motion to overrule the President shall be decided without amendment.

Remarks:

This new Standing Order provides the procedural machinery for overruling a decision of the President by Parliament under Article 37IF of the Constitution.

The purpose of paragraph (1) is to give Members time to study the President’s grounds and the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisers before a motion is moved to overrule the President.

Paragraph (2) requires the Speaker to be satisfied that the relevant decision of the President was in fact contrary to the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisers and liable to be overruled under Article 37IF.

Paragraph (3) requires a Minister to satisfy Parliament that the relevant Fifth Schedule entity has made a request to overrule a decision of the President, in cases where Article 37IF(3) requires such a request to be made before the President can be overruled.

Paragraph (4) sets out the standard form of words for a motion to overrule the President.

The purpose of paragraph (5) is to avoid any amendments to a motion that may create uncertainty about whether Parliament did in fact decide to overrule the President. Motions to overrule the President should be decided on a yes-or-no basis.

6. Standing Order No. 54 (Closure of debate)

~~(4) A question for the closure of debate shall not be considered to have been decided in the affirmative upon a division notwithstanding that the “Ayes” have it unless it appears by the numbers declared by the Speaker or a Deputy Speaker that not less than twenty five Members voted in the majority in support of the motion.~~

Remarks:

This amendment deletes paragraph (4) of S.O. No. 54 as a specific number of majority votes is not required under Article 57(1) of the Constitution. The closure of debate remains subject to the safeguards in S.O. No. 54(1), specifically that the question cannot be put if it appears to the Speaker or Chairman that the motion to close debate would be an abuse of the rules of Parliament or an infringement of the rights of the minority.

7. Standing Order No. 62 (Collection of voices)

(2) A Member may, instead of claiming a division, inform the Speaker or Chairman that he wishes his dissent or abstention to be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and the Official Report and his dissent or abstention shall be so recorded.

Remarks:

This amendment enables a Member to record his abstention in a collection of voices.

8. Standing Order No. 70 (Second reading)

(1) No Bill shall be read a second time until it has been printed and circulated to Members and has appeared in the *Gazette* not less than ~~seven~~ ten clear days before the day appointed for the second reading of the Bill.

Remarks:

This amendment increases the minimum interval between the publication of a Bill in the *Gazette* and its Second Reading from seven clear days to ten clear days, as a consequence of the proposed increase in the notice period required for Bill amendments set out under S.O. Amendment No. 9 below.

9. Standing Order No. 74 (Procedure in Committee of the whole Parliament on a Bill)

(3) (a) Except in the case of urgent Bills, no amendment shall be proposed unless ~~two~~ four clear days' notice thereof has been given:

Remarks:

This amendment increases the notice period required for amendments to a Bill (other than an urgent Bill) to four clear days. This will give Members more time to consider proposed amendments to Bills.

10. Standing Order No. 82 (Withholding of assent to Bills)

82. – (1) If the time limit for the President to signify his decision on a Bill is varied under the law, a Minister shall notify the Clerk of the varied time limit before the expiry of the varied time limit. If the President has not signified his decision on the Bill at the end of the time limit under the law for him to make a decision, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the *Gazette* and the Official Report.

(2) Upon receipt of a signification of the President of his decision to withhold assent to a Bill pursuant to the provisions of the law, the Speaker shall –

...

Remarks:

The first amendment requires a Minister to notify the Clerk if the time limit for the President to decide whether to assent to a Bill is varied under Article 21A(3) of the Constitution. The Clerk is required to publish a *Gazette* notification if the President fails to signify his decision within the applicable time limit. This will serve to inform Members and the public of the President's silence, which will trigger the deeming provisions in Article 21A(5).

The second amendment inserts a new paragraph number.

11. Standing Order No. 91 (Business of Supply)

(3) Proceedings on the business of Supply may continue past the moment of interruption pursuant to:

~~(a) an order of the Speaker or Chairman under Standing Order No. 2(5)(d);~~

(b) Standing Order No. 24 [*Adjournment on a definite matter of urgent public importance*]; ~~or~~

(ba) a direction of the Speaker that the business of Supply continues until a specified time after the moment of interruption;

Provided that such a direction must be made before the first allotted day, and may be made in respect of all or any of the allotted days;

(c) an order of Parliament on the motion of a Minister moved under paragraph (4) of this Standing Order; or

(d) an order of the Speaker or Chairman to extend time for 30 minutes after the moment of interruption or the time appointed under sub-paragraph (b), (ba) or (c).

~~(4) A Minister may move a motion under this Standing Order to continue the business of Supply for a specified period beyond the time set down by the Speaker under paragraph (3) of this Standing Order or, if the Speaker has not fixed such a time, until a specified time after the moment of interruption in respect of any or all of the allotted days, whether an order exempting any other business from interruption under Standing Order No. 4 [*Exempted business*] is in force or not. Such a motion is to be decided without amendment or debate.~~

(4) A Minister may move a motion under this paragraph to continue the business of Supply until a specified time after the moment of interruption in respect of any or all of the allotted days. Such a motion may be moved whether or not an order exempting any other business from interruption under Standing Order No. 4 [*Exempted business*] is in force or not. Such a motion may be moved in addition to any extensions of time pursuant to paragraph (3)(b), (ba) or (d) of this Standing Order. Such a motion is to be decided without amendment or debate.

Remarks:

A new sub-paragraph (ba) is added to S.O. No. 91(3) to empower the Speaker to make a direction to extend the time to which the business of Supply can continue, on any or all of the days allotted for the business of Supply. The Speaker's direction must be made before the first allotted day. Thereafter, any further extensions are to be made pursuant to paragraph (3)(d) or (4).

A new sub-paragraph (d) is added to S.O. No. 91(3) to empower the Speaker or the Chairman to make an order to extend time by 30 minutes beyond the moment of interruption or beyond the times specified under any of the other sub-paragraphs, so that the proceedings on an allotted day can end at a convenient point. With the new sub-paragraph (d), the existing sub-paragraph (a) is redundant and therefore deleted.

S.O. No. 91(4) is replaced in consequence of these two amendments.

12. Standing Order No. 93 (Supply Bill, Supplementary Supply Bill and Final Supply Bill)

(1A) Notwithstanding Standing Order No. 70(1) [Second reading], the Bill may, after it has been published in the Gazette, be read a second time at any time after the proceedings in the Committee of Supply relating to the Bill have been completed.

...

~~(6) Where, on the expiration of thirty days after the date the Bill has been presented to the President for his assent, the Speaker has not received any signification from the President withholding his assent to the Bill, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the Government Gazette.~~

(6) If the time limit for the President to signify his decision on the Bill is varied under the law, a Minister shall notify the Clerk of the varied time limit before the expiry of the varied time limit. If the President has not signified his decision on the Bill at the end of the time limit under the law for him to make a decision, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the Gazette and the Official Report.

...

~~(8) Where the President has withheld his assent to a Supply Bill or Supplementary Supply Bill contrary to the recommendation of the Council of Presidential Advisors, the Minister responsible for finance may give notice of his intention to move a motion that Parliament overrule the decision of the President, in pursuance of the law, and such motion shall be decided without amendment.~~

Remarks:

A new paragraph (1A) is added to S.O. No. 93 to enable the second reading of a Supply Bill, Supplementary Supply Bill or Final Supply Bill to be taken immediately after the completion of proceedings in the Committee of Supply relating to the Bill. Since the heads of expenditure contained in the Bill would have been fully considered in the Committee of Supply, the second reading of the Bill should be allowed to proceed immediately, notwithstanding S.O. No. 70(1) [Second reading].

S.O. No. 93(6) is replaced in view of Article 21(3) of the Constitution, under which the time limit for the President to make a decision on a Supply Bill, Supplementary Supply Bill or Final Supply Bill can be varied. The new paragraph (6) provides the procedure for the Clerk to be notified of the varied time limit and for a notification to

be published by the Clerk when the President has not signified his decision at the end of the time limit. This serves to inform Members and the public of the President's silence, which will trigger the deeming provisions in Article 21A(5).

S.O. No. 93(8) is deleted as a consequence of the new S.O. (A) under S.O. Amendment No. 5, which applies to all motions to overrule the President.

13. Standing Order No. 94 (Vote on Account)

(5A) If the time limit for the President to signify his decision on the resolution is varied under the law, a Minister shall notify the Clerk of the varied time limit before the expiry of the varied time limit. If the President has not signified his decision on the resolution at the end of the time limit under the law for him to make a decision, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the *Gazette* and the Official Report.

Remarks:

This amendment provides the procedure for the Clerk to be notified if the time limit for the President to make his decision on a resolution on a Vote on Account is varied under Article 21A(3) of the Constitution. The Clerk is required to publish a notification if the President fails to signify his decision within the applicable time limit. This serves to inform Members and the public of the President's silence, which will trigger the deeming provisions in Article 21A(5).

14. Standing Order No. 95 (Vote of Credit)

(5A) If the time limit for the President to signify his decision on the resolution is varied under the law, a Minister shall notify the Clerk of the varied time limit before the expiry of the varied time limit. If the President has not signified his decision on the resolution at the end of the time limit under the law for him to make a decision, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the *Gazette* and the Official Report.

Remarks:

This amendment serves the same purpose as the amendments to S.O. Nos. 93(6), 94 and 96.

15. Standing Order No. 96 (Motions on guarantees or loans)

(1A) If the time limit for the President to signify his decision on the resolution is varied under the law, a Minister shall notify the Clerk of the varied time limit before the expiry of the varied time limit. If the President has not signified his decision on the resolution at the end of the time limit under the law for him to make a decision, the Clerk shall publish a notification of this in the *Gazette* and the Official Report.

Remarks:

This amendment serves the same purpose as the amendment to S.O. Nos. 93(6), 94 and 95.

16. New Standing Order (B) – (to be inserted immediately after SO 110)

Authorised Reprint of Standing Orders

(1) The Speaker may, from time to time, direct the Clerk to prepare a reprint of the Standing Orders. A reprint must be approved by the Speaker and presented to Parliament. Upon presentation to Parliament, a reprint shall be deemed to be the authentic text of the Standing Orders.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1) of this Standing Order, the Clerk may, or the Speaker may direct the Clerk to —

(a) include any ruling of the Speaker in the reprint;

(b) supply or modify tables, headings, notes, indexes or other supplementary material;

(c) alter the order of the Standing Orders or renumber any Standing Order;

(d) alter the form of arrangement of any Standing Order by transposing words, by combining it in whole or in part with another Standing Order or by dividing it into two or more Standing Orders;

(e) sub-divide the Standing Orders into Parts or other Divisions;

(f) correct grammatical, typographical and similar mistakes in any Standing Order and to make additions, omissions or alterations not affecting the meaning of any Standing Order;

(g) make such formal alterations as to names, localities, departments, offices, titles and otherwise as may be necessary to bring the Standing Orders into conformity with the circumstances of Singapore;

(h) include or correct cross-references;

(i) delete any words, expressions, nomenclature or other provisions in the Standing Orders which have expired or become obsolete, and to substitute therefor, where necessary, appropriate words, expressions, nomenclature or provisions; and

(j) do all other things relating to form and method which may be necessary for the perfecting of a reprint of the Standing Orders.

Remarks:

This amendment empowers the Speaker to direct the Clerk to prepare reprints of the Standing Orders. The specific powers of the Speaker and the Clerk in preparing a reprint are modelled after provisions in the Revised Edition of the Laws Act (Cap. 275). The power to reprint the Standing Orders will facilitate the updating of the Standing Orders where such updates do not amount to a change in substantive meaning.

Miscellaneous and consequential amendments

17. Standing Order No. 1 (Interpretation)

“Publish” includes publishing in an electronic format, and “publication” has a corresponding meaning.

Remarks:

This amendment clarifies that matters to be published under the Standing Orders can be published in an electronic format.

18. Standing Order No. 36 (Alteration of terms of motion and postponement and withdrawal of motion)

36. – (1) If a Member who intended to move a motion of which he has given notice desires to alter its terms, he may do so by giving to the Clerk an amended notice of motion, duly signed as required by the provisions of ~~paragraph (2)~~ paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 34 [*Manner of giving notices of motions*], provided that such alteration does not, in the opinion of the Speaker, materially alter any principle embodied in the original motion or the scope thereof. The amended notice shall run from the time at which the original notice was given.

Remarks:

This amendment corrects a cross-referencing error.

19. Standing Order No. 45 (Motions not open to debate)

45. Motions on the following matters are not open to debate and immediately after its proposal, the question for such motions shall be put forthwith from the Chair:

(a) Exempted business [Standing Order Nos. 4(1) ~~and 91(2)~~];

(aa) Consideration of a Petition touching upon a motion or Bill before Parliament [Standing Order No. 18(6)];

...

(j) Supply resolutions [Standing Order No. 92(8) to (12), ~~(10) to (13)~~];

Remarks:

The new paragraph (aa) is inserted in consequence of the amendment to S.O. No. 18 [*Petitions*] in S.O. Amendment No. 2. The other amendments correct cross-referencing errors.

20. Miscellaneous amendments relating to printing, circulation and publication

It is recommended that the Standing Orders be amended to:

- (a) replace the word “printed” in S.O. Nos. 22(3), (4) and (7), 82(2)(b), 93(7)(b), 94(6)(b), 95(6)(b) and 96(2)(b) with the word “published”;
- (b) replace the word “printed” in S.O. Nos. 21(2)(a) and 34(4)(a) and (b) with the words “circulated to Members”.
- (c) delete the words “printed and” in S.O. No. 31(1); and
- (d) replace the words “printed and circulated by him” in S.O. No. 34(5) with the words “circulated to Members”.

Remarks:

These amendments are to more clearly delineate between matters which have to be printed, circulated to Members and published under the Standing Orders.

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS MADE TO THE COMMITTEE

Question Time

1 Suggestions were made to increase Question Time, which is currently fixed by S.O. No. 22(1) at 1.5 hours per sitting day.

2 The Leader of the House stated that the Government recognised the importance of Question Time as the means by which Members hold the Government to account. The Government had in the past moved to extend Question Time on an ad hoc basis, for up to 3 hours. The Government is prepared to continue this practice, having regard to both the number of questions and the volume of public business.

3 On this basis, the Committee agreed that there was no need to increase the duration of Question Time fixed under S.O. No. 22(1).

Introduction of Bills with Ministerial Statements

4 A suggestion was made that a Government Bill should be introduced together with a Ministerial Statement providing information about the Bill.

5 The Leader of the House stated that information about a Bill can be found in a number of places. There is the Explanatory Statement to the Bill, which explains the legal effect of the provisions. Ministries publish fact sheets or press releases when Bills are introduced. Important policy changes are also announced in advance before legislation is introduced, for example during the annual Committee of Supply debates. Public consultations are also conducted for many Bills. Finally, if a Member wishes to understand

a Bill better before the second reading debate, he can approach the frontbencher in charge of the Bill.

6 The Committee also considered that requiring a Ministerial Statement when a Bill is introduced, together with the possibility of Members seeking clarifications, may preempt the second reading debate. For this reason, and also in view of the points made by the Leader of the House, the Committee does not see the need to require a Ministerial Statement when a Bill is introduced.

Second reading of Bills

7 A suggestion was made to increase the lead time before a Bill comes up for debate, and to provide more sitting days to debate a Bill.

8 The Committee has recommended that the minimum interval between the first and second readings of a Bill be increased from 7 clear days to 10 clear days. The Committee would also point out that there are now no restrictions on the total amount of time that Parliament can spend on debating on a Bill.

Committee stage and third reading of Bills

9 A suggestion was made that the committee stage and third reading of a Bill should not take place immediately after the second reading of the Bill.

10 The Committee would point out that the Standing Orders already provide for mechanisms by which the committee stage and the third reading of a Bill can be deferred. Whether these mechanisms are used for any particular Bill is a matter for Parliament.

Creation of issues-based select committees

11 A suggestion was made to create issues-based select committees to consider specific issues.

12 The Committee considered that there are a number of existing procedures by which Members can raise specific issues for consideration. A Member can raise a matter on the adjournment motion, present a Petition for the consideration of the Public Petitions Committee, move a motion for debate, or introduce a private member's Bill. The Committee considered that a Member wishing to raise specific issues can avail himself of these procedures, and there is no present need to create issues-based select committees.

Suggestions not relating to the Standing Orders

13 The Committee also considered suggestions:

- (a) to provide Members with a budget for a parliamentary office and legislative assistants;
- (b) to create a Parliamentary live feed; and
- (c) to create a Parliamentary research service that goes beyond the current library.

14 These suggestions do not relate to the Standing Orders and are therefore beyond the Committee's remit.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

1st Meeting

Wednesday, 22 March 2017
11.00 am

PRESENT:

Mdm. Speaker (Mdm. Halimah Yacob) (*in the Chair*)
Mr. Charles Chong
Mr. Desmond Choo
Ms. Grace Fu Hai Yien
Mr. Png Eng Huat
Ms. Rahayu Mahzam

ABSENT:

Mr. Chan Chun Sing
Mr. Lim Biow Chuan
Ms. Joan Pereira
Mr. Patrick Tay Teck Guan

1 The Committee deliberated.

Adjourned till 10.00 am on
Thursday, 6 April 2017.

2nd Meeting

Thursday, 6 April 2017
10.00 am

PRESENT:

Mdm. Speaker (Mdm. Halimah Yacob) (*in the Chair*)
Mr. Charles Chong
Mr. Lim Biow Chuan
Mr. Chan Chun Sing
Mr. Desmond Choo
Ms. Grace Fu Hai Yien
Ms. Joan Pereira
Mr. Png Eng Huat
Ms. Rahayu Mahzam
Mr. Patrick Tay Teck Guan

1 The Committee deliberated.

Report

2 The Chairman's report brought up and read the first time.

3 Resolved, "That the Chairman's report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph."

Paragraphs 1 to 5 inclusive read and agreed to.

4 Resolved, "That this report be the Report of the Committee to Parliament."

5 Agreed that the Chairman do present the Report to Parliament on Tuesday, 25 April 2017.

Adjourned *sine die*.
