

Written submission from Presiding Officer on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau
19 February 2025

Thank you for your letter of 22 January in which you invite the Parliamentary Bureau to give its views on proposed Standing Order rule changes. The Bureau considered your letter at its meeting on 4 February.

When the Bureau discussed the proposed rule changes, a range of views were expressed, and Business Managers indicated that their party positions would be provided in separate responses to the SPPA Committee.

In relation to the rule changes on the election of the Presiding Officer/Deputy Presiding Officers, the Bureau noted the proposal of the SPPA Committee giving effect to the recommendation of the cross-party audit, and noted that the proposed rule would operate in a similar way to the way that rules for election of the Speaker and Deputy Speakers at the House of Commons have operated since 2010.

The Bureau noted that the proposed rule changes in relation to nominations to the Parliamentary Bureau and the election of members of the Parliamentary corporation sought to strengthen the language in the existing rules relating to gender balance. The Bureau considered that strengthening these rules would be positive in promoting equal participation in leadership roles in the Parliament.¹

Business Managers agreed that progress should be made towards a position where equality exists between men and women in relation to both their representation and their participation in the Parliament. During the Bureau's discussion, it was noted that historically very few members of the Parliamentary Bureau have been women. In session 5, the current rule was formulated following the election of an all-male SPCB.²

The Bureau noted that the proposed rule changes in relation to membership of the Bureau and SPCB, while seeking to strengthen wording, do not ensure gender balance in membership of those bodies.

¹ Alexander Burnett noted his party's dissent to this paragraph

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