

Written submission from Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
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Thank you for your letter of 22nd Jan, I'm sorry for the slight delay. As an original member of the parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit Board, I am delighted to see this feeding into consideration around the standing orders of our parliament.

I'm happy to offer a view on each of the proposed changes.

1: The Audit recommended that the Committee propose an amendment to Standing Orders to specify there should be a minimum of 40% membership for women for the Parliamentary Bureau

I entirely support this. The Bureau is the principle organism for scheduling parliamentary business and as such shapes the priorities of the parliamentary gender. A guaranteed core of female coices in this matters hugely. As such I support all the proposed rule changes.

2: The Audit recommended that the SPPA Committee propose the introduction of a formal quota for Presiding Officer/Deputy Presiding Officer – at least one man and one woman. The Audit stated that this recognised existing experience, and by formalising an existing Scottish Parliament norm, protects and further legitimises this for the future.

I remember speaking in favour of this change when I was on the board. Presiding officers shape both the flow and culture of debates. Ensuring a level of gender balance in these roles, will ensure that balance floes into the culture of the chamber. I support all proposed rule changes.

3: The Audit recommended that the Committee propose an amendment to Standing Orders to specify there should be a minimum of 40% membership for women for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

I think the proposed word change to standing orders, captures the right balance here. The SPCB is a vital organ of the parliament, but relates less to democratic representation, as such I don't think it needs a proscriptive quota attached to it.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute.