



Appendix B

Proposal for the tabling of committee reports – Hon Roger Price MP

Current situation

The selection committee currently allocates a ten minute slot for the tabling of committee and delegation reports in the House.

This is desperately disappointing for those members that put a big effort into committee reports. In order to address this disappointment a take note procedure has developed whereby, with agreement between the Chief Whips, a report is referred to the Main Committee, which allows committee members and other interested members to speak to the report.

The principal short comings of the take note procedure is that usually the report gets debated in the Main Committee some time after the report is tabled and any contribution by committee members loses impact as a result. Also few other (non committee) members put their names down because of the lack of timeliness.

If the committee report is from a joint committee it is often the case that the report is tabled in the Senate and subsequently tabled in the House some weeks later. The time lags involved I would have thought should be of some concern for the House and its members.

The current practice is frustrating for individuals involved and unsatisfactory.

Proposed changes

1. Certification by Speaker

Currently there is authority under Standing Order 247 for committee reports to be released when the House is not sitting. The committee may send the report to the Speaker and when the Speaker receives the report, the report may be published. I propose no change to this procedure. However, I do propose that all reports be received and certified by the Speaker even when they are proposed to be tabled in the House shortly thereafter.

The receipt by the Speaker would allow the public release of the report at 8am on a sitting Monday thus allowing all members, the public and the media to have early copies of the report.

2. Statements in the Main Committee

I propose that the Main Committee could sit on a sitting Monday from 11am to 1.45pm. This would allow Members other than the chair and deputy chair to make statements about the report soon after the public release of the report. This would deal with the two significant problems that we currently have – allowing other members to make statements about the report on a timely basis; and the limited time available at present to discuss committee reports.

(This will require a change to Standing Order 186 which prevents the Main Committee meeting when the House is not sitting).

3. A new Report in detail questioning procedure

I propose a new procedure to allow in detail questioning about a committee report at the conclusion of statements in the Main Committee. There would be a 15 minute questioning process whereby members of the House may question the chair or deputy chair of the committee about aspects of the committee report. The committee chair or deputy chair may elect to answer these questions or may refer the question to a member who might have particular expertise about that aspect of the committee report. This questioning process would sit more comfortably in the more interactive character of the Main Committee. The procedure is not proposed to apply to delegation reports.

4. Tabling in the House

The presentation of committee and delegation reports in the House currently precedes private members' business and grievances debates. It is proposed that tabling in the House at this time would continue and a committee chair or nominee would present the report and minutes as at present, advise that statements about the report had taken place (or were shortly to take place) in the Main Committee and move a procedural motion that the House take note of the report. Thus the actual tabling in the House would take very little time.

5. The Selection Committee

The selection committee would schedule the tabling in the House and also schedule the statements, and if requested by committees, the question process at the conclusion of the statements, in the Main Committee. The selection committee will be in a position to select far more Private Members' motions than it currently is able to. The inability to debate more private members' motions currently is compounded by the fact that so many sitting Mondays are lost due to public holidays. This year six sitting Mondays will be lost.

6. Committee press conferences

Committees are of course free to choose whatever time they like, subject to a breach of privilege, to hold their press conferences. This is usually done around noon on the day of tabling, however, given the Speaker's certification process recommended earlier a committee could choose to have a press conference at 10am and if the report were significant the committee might be able to be picked up on the midday news. It certainly provides much greater flexibility for committees in scheduling their news conferences and gives them a greater chance of being reported.

7. I favour having the debate in the Main Committee. However, the House could sit earlier say at 10.30am on a sitting Monday and the Main Committee would be by passed. However, I have approached the Chief Government Whip about having October 7th as a Private Members' day to make up for the lost sitting Mondays but the government has declined to agree. Sitting the House earlier may run into the same reluctance.

