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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PRACTICE

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THIRD EDITION

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TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND  
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



# Preface

Many developments have occurred in the practice and procedure of the House since the publication in 1989 of the second edition of *House of Representatives Practice*. The implementation in February 1994 of major recommendations of the Procedure Committee has been the most important of these. The establishment of the Main Committee, meeting at the same time as the House itself, has in effect provided a 'second Chamber' to which non-controversial bills and other matters can be referred for debate. This innovation has achieved the Procedure Committee's objective of providing additional time for the consideration of legislation, and this in turn has resulted in backbenchers having more opportunities to speak on bills which are of interest to them or importance to their electorates.

The House's committee system, established in its present form in 1987, has grown to assume a greater significance. As part of the group of changes that included the establishment of the Main Committee, provisions were made to enable bills to be referred to standing committees for advisory reports. This procedure, as the Procedure Committee envisaged, used for selected bills only, has enabled committees to bring their expertise to bear on bills, and it has been acknowledged that legislation has been improved substantially as a result of such consideration.

In this third edition, updated to December 1996, we have sought to cover all significant developments since 1989. Again, some material of a more historical nature has been deleted, but references have been made to relevant pages in earlier editions.

*House of Representatives Practice* was first published in 1981. Its publication was an important event in the history of the House, and a most significant achievement for the Department of the House of Representatives. The professional skill and dedication of a number of officers contributed to this major task, but primary credit was given appropriately to the editor, Mr J. A. Pettifer, CBE, and the Assistant Editors, Mr A. R. Browning, and Mr J. K. Porter. The second edition was edited by Mr A. R. Browning with Mr B. Wright and Mr P. E. Fowler as Assistant Editors.

The production of the third edition has extended over some 22 months. I was particularly fortunate to have as Assistant Editors Mr B. Wright and Mr P. E. Fowler whose contribution, again, has been major and outstanding. Other officers who have contributed significantly are Mr J. Rees, Mrs L. Eveston, Mr J. Sherd and Mr I. Cochran. I am grateful to each of them, and to others, including the Deputy Clerk, Mr I. Harris, who have assisted directly, or indirectly by ensuring that other work did not fall behind thus enabling other officers to spend as much time as possible on the project.

I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the trustees of the May Memorial Fund and of Butterworths to use extracts from *May's Parliamentary Practice*.

For the first time, *House of Representatives Practice* will be published in electronic form and be accessible on the Internet. This will make the work available to many more people, and carry to a new audience information about the Parliament generally, and the House in particular. It is my hope that this third edition will prove to be as useful a publication as its two predecessors.

L M BARLIN  
Clerk of the House  
January 1997

