

## Procedures for dealing with witnesses

*Resolution adopted 13 November 2013*

That, in their dealings with witnesses, committees of the House shall observe the following procedures:

- (1) A witness shall be invited to attend a committee meeting to give evidence. A witness shall be summoned to appear (whether or not the witness was previously invited to appear) only where the committee has made a decision that the circumstances warrant the issue of a summons.
- (2) Where a committee desires that a witness produce documents or records relevant to the committee's inquiry, the witness shall be invited to do so, and an order that documents or records be produced shall be made (whether or not an invitation to produce documents or records has previously been made) only where the committee has made a decision that the circumstances warrant such an order.
- (3) A witness shall be given notice of a meeting at which he or she is to appear, and shall be supplied with a copy of the committee's terms of reference and an indication of the matters expected to be dealt with during the appearance. Where appropriate a witness may be supplied with a transcript of relevant evidence already taken in public.
- (4) A witness may be given the opportunity to make a submission in writing before appearing to give oral evidence.
- (5) A witness shall be given reasonable access to any documents or records that the witness has produced to a committee.
- (6) A witness shall be offered, before giving evidence, the opportunity to make application, before or during the hearing of the witness's evidence, for any or all of the witness's evidence to be heard in camera, and shall be invited to give reasons for any such application. The witness may give reasons in camera. If the application is not granted, the witness shall be notified of reasons for that decision.
- (7) Before giving any evidence in camera a witness shall be informed whether it is the intention of the committee to publish or present to the House all or part of that evidence, that it is within the power of the committee to do so, and that the House has the authority to order the production and

publication of undisclosed evidence. Should the committee decide to publish or present to the House all or part of the evidence taken in camera, the witness shall be advised in advance. A member, in a protest or dissent added to a report, shall not disclose evidence taken in camera unless so authorised by the committee.

- (8) The Chair of a committee shall take care to ensure that all questions put to witnesses are relevant to the committee's inquiry and that the information sought by those questions is necessary for the purpose of that inquiry.
- (9) Where a witness objects to answering any question put to him or her on any ground, including the grounds that it is not relevant, or that it may tend to incriminate him or her, he or she shall be invited to state the ground upon which he or she objects to answering the question. The committee may then consider, in camera, whether it will insist upon an answer to the question, having regard to the relevance of the question to the committee's inquiry and the importance to the inquiry of the information sought by the question. If the committee determines that it requires an answer to the question, the witness shall be informed of that determination, and of the reasons for it, and shall be required to answer the question in camera, unless the committee resolves that it is essential that it be answered in public. Where a witness declines to answer a question to which a committee has required an answer, the committee may report the facts to the House.
- (10) Where a committee has reason to believe that evidence about to be given may reflect on a person, the committee shall give consideration to hearing that evidence in camera.
- (11) Where evidence is given which reflects upon a person, the committee may provide a reasonable opportunity for the person reflected upon to have access to that evidence and to respond to that evidence by written submission or appearance before the committee.
- (12) A witness may make application to be accompanied by counsel or an adviser or advisers and to consult counsel or the adviser(s) in the course of the meeting at which he or she appears. If such an application is not granted, the witness shall be notified of reasons for that decision. A witness accompanied by counsel or an adviser or advisers shall be given reasonable opportunity to consult with counsel or the adviser(s) during a meeting at which he or she appears.

- (13) A departmental officer shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy, and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of him or her to superior officers or to the appropriate Minister.
- (14) Witnesses shall be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- (15) Reasonable opportunity shall be afforded to witnesses to request corrections in the transcript of their evidence and to put before a committee additional written material supplementary to their evidence. Witnesses may also request the opportunity to give further oral evidence.
- (16) Where a committee has any reason to believe that any person has been improperly influenced in respect of evidence which has been or may be given before the committee, or has been subjected to or threatened with any penalty or injury in respect of any evidence given or in respect of prospective evidence, the committee shall take all reasonable steps to ascertain the facts of the matter. Where the committee considers that the facts disclose that a person may have been improperly influenced or subjected to or threatened with penalty or injury in respect of evidence which may be or has been given before the committee, the committee shall report the facts and its conclusions to the House.
- (17) That the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.