



Media Release

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Members Approve and Adopt Historic Amendments to Standing Orders to Enhance Parliamentary Procedures

GEORGE TOWN, 7th February 2025

Last night, in one of its final acts of the 2021-2025 Term, Parliament unanimously approved Government Motion No. 9 and thereby adopted the Parliament Standing Orders 2025, a new and modern set of Standing Orders. This represents the first comprehensive overhaul of the Parliament Standing Orders since Standing Orders were first introduced in 1976. The new Standing Orders will come into force on 28th February 2025, and will govern procedures when the new Term commences following the upcoming General Elections.

The Standing Orders are the legal rules which establish and guide parliamentary procedures. They were initially permitted under the Cayman Islands Constitution Order (1965) to regulate Meetings of the Legislative Assembly, Committees, and other parliamentary activities, and were formally promulgated by the Legislative Assembly in 1976. Since then, the Standing Orders have received only *ad hoc* revisions, despite the significant constitutional and parliamentary advances that have occurred since 1976.

"Our Parliament and its Standing Orders are the cornerstone of our democracy, and for many years, I have longed to see them revised to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our legislative proceedings," **commented Speaker Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin**. "These reforms represent a significant step forward in strengthening our parliamentary democracy and finally bring the procedures in Parliament into alignment with the constitutional and other parliamentary changes which have taken place over the last 15 years."

"They will enhance the ability of Parliament to speak with and scrutinize the work of Government effectively while ensuring that parliamentary proceedings remain accessible to the public and in line with modern needs," **the Speaker noted**. "Last night's unanimous adoption by the Parliament of these modern fit for purpose Standing Orders brings me a great deal of satisfaction and pride."

As Minister in the 2005-2009 Administration, Sir Alden led the Constitutional Modernisation Initiative on behalf of the Cayman Islands Government. This resulted in the replacement of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 1972 and the approval of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order (2009) in a historic referendum in May 2009.



As Premier, Sir Alden also led the significant effort to further advance the Cayman Islands Constitution with the amendment of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 by the Cayman Islands Constitution Order (2020). Among other things, this amendment resulted in the transition of the Legislative Assembly to the Parliament of the Cayman Islands.

Sir Alden also championed the effort to make the Parliament an autonomous entity, independent of control by the Executive and successfully piloted the Parliament Management Act to safe passage, thus creating the Parliament Management Commission and Parliament Management Council (which now manages the administration of The Parliament).

“The Parliament Standing Orders 2025 is the final piece of the structural change necessary to give the Cayman Islands a modern, forward-looking democratic framework, fit for the 21st Century,” **said the Speaker**. The new Standing Orders is the product of more than three years of work by the Standing Orders Working Group. The Group commenced its review of the Parliament Standing Orders in 2021 under the chairmanship of the Speaker at that time, Hon. Dr. W. McKeever Bush, and continued under former Speaker, Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks.

During the current Speaker’s tenure, the Working Group, which included the Honourable Attorney General, the First Legislative Counsel, the Clerk of Parliament and Assistant Clerks, held more than 25 meetings over the last year to rigorously review the Standing Orders.

Key areas of reform include:

- **Improved legislative processes:** The amendments introduce clearer procedures for the presentation, reading, and publication of Bills, ensuring greater consistency with the Constitution, namely the 2020 amendment to the Constitution which provided that Bills must be published at least 28 days before being considered unless the Premier certifies urgency.
- **More structured parliamentary sittings:** The new Standing Orders formalise the meeting days of Parliament as Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and adjust sitting hours from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., with an optional 30-minute suspension at 5 p.m. Additionally, a **fixed recess period** is introduced from the first week of July to the first week of September each year, except for urgent and extraordinary matters.
- **Enhanced transparency mechanisms:** The introduction of a **Premier’s Question Time** every Wednesday for 30 minutes allows Members to pose questions about the Government’s overall performance. A 15-minute **Urgent Questions** period will also be available at each sitting, allowing Members to raise pressing matters in the public interest.



- **Strengthened committee oversight:** The Finance Committee will now have enhanced powers to summon individuals and request necessary documents for its deliberations. Provisions also allow the House to resolve itself into a Finance Committee or for the Chairman to summon a meeting when needed.
- **Greater efficiency in parliamentary debates:** The reforms introduce time limits for speeches—personal explanations will now be limited to 10 minutes, while government statements will be capped at 20 minutes with prior Cabinet approval.
- **Modernised procedures:** Provisions now allow for virtual attendance in exceptional circumstances with the Speaker's approval, reflecting the evolving needs of Parliament. It also allows for a Member to use supplementary visual aids during a debate.
- **Standing Business Committee:** Specific provisions were added for this Committee which will now be chaired by the Speaker of Parliament and no longer require that the members be elected by the House.

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END OF ADVISORY

Notes:

- The Government Motion No. 9 of 2024-2025 can be found on the Parliament's website: <https://parliament.ky/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/GM-No.-9-Motion-to-Amend-the-Parliament-Standing-Orders-2024-Revision.pdf>
- The Parliament Standing Orders 2025 Revision will be made available on the Parliament's website once it has been published by the Office of the Clerk.

Image:

- The Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, during the 2024-2025 Session.
- Photos may be used with attribution to the "Parliament of the Cayman Islands", visit our Flickr page to download: [flickr.com/photos/caymanparliament/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/caymanparliament/albums).

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