

Proxy Voting Scheme (November 2020)

A. Eligibility

1. Proxy voting shall be available to
 - a. new mothers, new fathers and adoptive parents,
 - b. Members who do not wish to vote in person for medical or public health reasons related to the pandemic.
2. A Member shall demonstrate eligibility for part (a) of the scheme (parental leave) by self-certifying that they meet the eligibility requirements.
3. A Member shall demonstrate eligibility for part (b) of the scheme by writing to the Speaker to say that they do not wish to vote in person for medical or public health reasons related to the pandemic.
4. A Member is also eligible for a proxy vote in circumstances where there have been complications relating to childbirth. The Speaker will determine the arrangements that apply in this situation, including the duration of the proxy vote, in consultation with the Member concerned.
5. The entitlement to a proxy vote, and to its use, is personal to the eligible Member.
6. It shall not be compulsory to take up eligibility for the scheme.

B. Duration

7. The maximum duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy for part (a) of the scheme (parental leave) shall be as follows:
 - Seven months for the biological mother of a baby, or for the primary or single adopter of a baby or child, of which a maximum of one month shall be taken before the due date or adoption date and a maximum of six months after the due date or adoption date.
 - Two weeks for the biological father of a baby, the partner of the person giving birth or the second adopter of a baby or child.
8. Any period of absence taken by a mother or primary adopter shall start at or before the due date or adoption date and should be taken as a continuous period of up to seven months (a maximum of one month before the due date or adoption date and a maximum of six months after the due date or adoption date), including periods when the House is adjourned, prorogued or dissolved.
9. The absence claimed by the father, partner or second adopter shall be taken in one continuous period of two weeks and shall be taken within six months of the birth or adoption date.
10. A proxy vote under part (b) of the scheme (medical or public health reasons related to the pandemic) shall last until the expiration of the temporary Standing Order (Proxy voting during the pandemic) or until the House otherwise orders.
11. A Member eligible for the scheme shall specify in writing to the Speaker the date

on which the proxy vote shall begin (and, in the case of parental absence, end), subject to the maximum durations set out in the scheme. During that period the Member shall be entitled to cast a vote by proxy.

12. If the specified start (or end) date of absence given is not a sitting day, the period of entitlement shall begin (or end) when the Speaker takes the Chair on the next sitting day.

13. A Member may apply for a proxy vote on any day before the specified start day. Applications may be taken until the rise of the House on any sitting day and 3pm on any non-sitting day. The period of entitlement shall begin when the Speaker takes the Chair on the next sitting day.

14. If the Speaker is satisfied that there are urgent and unforeseeable circumstances, he may accept late applications for proxy votes, or to vary proxy votes, under part (b) of the scheme. This is at the Speaker's discretion.

C. Designation of proxy

15. When applying for a proxy vote, the Member eligible for proxy voting shall name the Member who has agreed to carry her or his proxy vote, thereby vouching that an agreement has been entered into.

15. A Member shall be free to choose any Member of the House who is eligible to vote in divisions to act as a proxy.

16. A Member may nominate no more than one proxy at a time.

D. Publishing the arrangement

17. On receipt of the specified information the Speaker shall issue a certificate, and cause it to be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.

E. Varying the arrangement

18. A Member who wishes to change the Member who is their proxy or to end their period of proxy voting, shall give written notice to the Speaker as early as possible, and at the very latest by either (a) the rise of the House on the sitting day before the change is to take effect, or (b) 3pm on a non-sitting day before that day.

19. The Speaker shall issue a new certificate if required under paragraph 18 above, which shall appear in the Votes and Proceedings either on the day that it is issued or on the first sitting day after issue if the day of issue is a non-sitting day.

F. Exercising the proxy vote

20. No Member may vote in person if they have a proxy vote in operation.

21. A Member eligible to vote by proxy must agree with the Member nominated as

their proxy when the proxy vote will be cast and how it will be exercised.

22. A proxy vote may be cast according to the provisions of the Standing Order (Voting by proxy).

23. A Member designated as a proxy will be expected to act in strict accordance with the instruction given by the absent Member.

24. A Member designated as a proxy may cast their own vote one way and the proxy vote the other, and may cast a proxy vote without casting their own vote at all.

25. A Member registered as voting by proxy who wishes to vote in person shall be entitled to do so, provided that the Speaker has been notified by the rise of the House on the previous sitting day or by 3pm on a non-sitting day that the proxy arrangement is to be suspended. (see para 18)

26. In divisions in legislative grand committees, a Member who is not a member of the committee shall be entitled to cast a proxy vote for a committee member.

G. Recording a proxy vote in a division in the House or Committee of the whole House

27. A Member casting a proxy vote in a division shall inform the Tellers, and shall notify the division clerks, under arrangements authorised by the Speaker, of the name of the Member for whom they are proxy voting.

28. At the same time, the Member casting the proxy vote shall make it clear whether that Member is also casting his or her own vote.

29. When listing the result of divisions, both online and in its printed edition, the Official Report (Hansard) shall note votes cast by proxy, including the Member who cast the proxy vote.

30. The record of a proxy vote shall be treated as part of the digital record of the Commons.