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Chair

Mr. Tom Lukiwski

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC)): Colleagues, it being 11 a.m., we will start the meeting now.

I have just one quick comment before we begin. We do have another committee coming in here at 1 p.m. sharp. We're going to try to get out of here, out of courtesy for our colleagues who will be coming behind us, no later than 1 p.m. If we adjourn slightly before that, all the better. We'll see how things go.

With us today we have witnesses from the Treasury Board Secretariat. Brian Pagan has been with us many times before.

Mr. Pagan, it's good to see you again. I understand you have an opening statement. If you care to commence, sir, and introduce those witnesses who are with you, we'll start the meeting immediately.

[Translation]

Mr. Brian Pagan (Assistant Secretary, Expenditure Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure to be here again. With me are my colleagues, Ms. Renée LaFontaine, chief financial officer, and Mr. Daryl Sprecher, senior director, expenditure management sector.

I will begin by giving you an overview of the 2017-18 Supplementary Estimates (B). I will then be pleased to answer your questions. The President of the Treasury Board will join us at about noon.

To begin, I will briefly describe the government's spending cycle. We will then look at how the Supplementary Estimates are structured, as well as the total amount of this budget, and the whole fiscal year.

[English]

We will also look at how these estimates reflect the priorities set out in the fiscal framework and in budget 2017. Before concluding, I will also briefly talk about planned changes to estimates for 2018-19. I have a presentation that has been made available to the committee, and that is the frame for these remarks.

As you'll see in that presentation, on slide 3, we depict the supply calendar for Parliament. The parliamentary calendar is organized according to three supply periods ending June 23, December 10, and March 26. Supplementary estimates are a normal part of the supply process, and these supplementary estimates (B) for the period ending

December 10 present information to Parliament on the Government of Canada's spending requirements that were not sufficiently developed in time for inclusion in the main estimates that were tabled February 23.

On slide 4, we see an overview of the way in which the supplementary estimates document is organized. The first few pages of the tabled document summarize the authorities and the amounts submitted to Parliament for its approval. They give additional information on major items and on horizontal initiatives. As usual, the largest section of the tabled document details requirements by department and agency. Each organization displays its requirements by vote and initiative, and we have tagged these initiatives to the appropriate budget year as applicable. For instance, initiatives from budget 2017 are tagged as budget 2017.

The tabled document ends with the proposed schedules to the appropriation bill, which are based on amounts presented in these estimates. Additional details are also available on the online version of the document. We have added new detail in response to feedback from committees. For example, a graphical summary was provided for the first time in supplementary estimates (A). We have repeated that depiction of estimates.

When we appeared at this committee in March, Mr. McCauley asked if we could provide an Excel version of supplementary estimates. I am happy to report that, for these supplementary estimates (B), we have provided details by organization in Excel data tables on the Canada.ca website.

Finally, I would remind the committee that the TBS InfoBase is also available to provide you with more information on authorities and expenditures.

As we see on slide 5, these supplementary estimates provide information on \$4.5 billion in voted budgetary appropriations for 71 organizations. The new funding supports many initiatives announced in budget 2017 as well as spending set out in prior budgets and confirmed in the fiscal framework.

These estimates also provide an update on forecasted statutory spending that has previously been approved by Parliament. The \$395-million increase in statutory spending reflects adjustments for public debt charges, major transfers, and the cost of employee benefits associated with the initiatives funded in these estimates. It also includes a new statutory transfer payment for home care and mental health services, as announced in budget 2017.

Turning to slide 7, we see a summary of the major voted items, and more detail is, in fact, provided on page 5 of the tabled document. In these estimates, we've highlighted eight initiatives of \$100 million or more. These eight initiatives total approximately \$2.3 billion, which is slightly more than half of the voted amount in these supplementary estimates.

The largest item on the list relates to compensation adjustments for the public service following the ratification of a number of collective agreements. This funding will be allocated across government departments.

• (1105)

The next item, for National Defence, is an aggregation of the additions and subtractions, or the pluses and minuses, for 19 capital projects, including the Arctic and offshore patrol ship, and the tactical armoured patrol vehicle project. The third item is also from DND, and that reflects pay increases to Canadian Forces members.

The remaining five major items in the list cover a wide variety of programs and initiatives, such as humanitarian assistance, public service group insurance and benefit plans, a settlement payment to follow royal assent of the Cree nation governance legislation, fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft requirements, and a re-profile of funding for the new Champlain Bridge.

Turning to slide 8, we see a visual depiction or representation of the major spending themes in these supplementary estimates. As I mentioned, this is also available in the online version. As you can see from the slide, the largest item, \$1.3 billion, relates to compensation and benefits across the public service, RCMP, and Canadian Forces. Government-wide compensation and benefits represent approximately 30% of the funding to be voted by Parliament in these estimates.

The second biggest item or theme is for National Defence capital projects, totalling \$668 million, and this is related to four major projects: the aggregation of the re-profiles that I spoke of, as well as fixed-wing search and rescue aircrafts, and the light-armoured vehicle.

Other major themes include support for indigenous peoples at approximately \$600 million, as well as innovation and federal bridges.

Slide 9 speaks to the progress that we have made in implementing budget 2017 initiatives. The committee will recall that budget 2017 was tabled in March, and that is after the main estimates, which were tabled on February 23. Accordingly, supplementary estimates (A), which were tabled May 11, presented the first opportunity to bring forward new measures announced in budget 2017 for parliamentary approval.

These supplementary estimates (B) before you today include 46 initiatives from budget 2017, totalling \$1 billion, or roughly 22% of the supplementary estimates (B) requirements. With these supplementary estimates (B), we will have brought before Parliament approximately 76% of the spending measures in this year's budget. We would anticipate bringing forward additional funds related to budget 2017 as well as other government priorities in the final supplementary estimates of the fiscal year to be tabled in February.

Before concluding, I'll give an update on the estimates reform project. In June, a number of changes were made to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, including a change to Standing Order 81, which deals with supply. As a result of this change, interim estimates for 2018-19 will be tabled for the first time in February. These interim estimates will support the first appropriation bill of 2018-19, and then a full main estimates will be tabled on or before April 16, which is to say after the budget, and will therefore create the possibility of including budget items in the main estimates.

To bring the budget and estimates even closer together, we are working with our colleagues in Finance to include information in the budget about new programs on a cash basis, and this development will support the possibility of including budget 2018 planned spending in the main estimates document to be tabled on or before April 16. As a consequence of this, we would anticipate not having a requirement for a spring supplementary estimates if, in fact, we are able to bring budget measures into the main estimates.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, that concludes my presentation.

As to the next steps, in December, the government will introduce the supply bill for the Supplementary Estimates. The President of the Treasury Board will then table the 2017-18 Supplementary Estimates (C) and the first Main Estimates for 2018-19 in February.

Should you have any questions about the Supplementary Estimates, Ms. LaFontaine, Mr. Sprecher, and I will be pleased to answer them.

• (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Pagan.

We'll start with our normal seven-minute round of questions with Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here with us today. I very much appreciate it, as always.

I have a few questions off the top dealing with the cycle, and obviously it's changing, I understand, from your comments and from what I believe the procedure will be.

We'll do supplementary estimates (C) in February under what I'll call the "old regime" for lack of a better phrase. Simultaneously there will be an interim for fiscal 2018-19 as well. As this committee we will have to be doing those at the same time, it's almost a double cohort then.

Do you see any problem with that or any confusion that might flow from that as we adjust from the old cycle to the new cycle?

Mr. Brian Pagan: As you know, we've presented some ideas to this committee in terms of ways in which we can simplify and make more coherent the estimates process, and we see this as a very positive development in terms of bringing greater clarity and coherence to what we're doing with it. The reality is that we have always, in the supply period ending March 26, presented both the final supplementaries for the year in which we're in, and the estimates requirements for the year ahead.

The confusion that has created is not in being able to sort out one fiscal year or another. The confusion has been that we've been presenting the future-year requirements in advance of the budget, and then we've had to catch up through the supply calendar with significant spending, billions and billions of dollars, in supplementary estimates.

For this year, in 2018-19 we will table supplementary estimates (C) that will conclude requirements of departments to deliver programs and services for this year, and the interim main estimates will simply be an extension of the existing authorities that have been approved by Parliament to this point. We'll flatline, if you will. If department X has \$100 million, we will take a portion of that \$100 million and make that the starting point for the requirements next year. This will have the additional benefit of eliminating some confusion about what we call sunseting programs.

In the past, we've used...as an example, Marine Atlantic. The continuation of funding has been subject to a budget decision. With the budget coming after the main estimates, we've had no choice but to table a main estimates that does not assume the continuation of that funding. It has been perceived as a cut or a reduction, but in fact, it was not. It was a decision not yet taken that was confirmed by the budget.

By tabling our interim estimates in this way we will avoid any semblance of reductions. If there are to be reductions, they will clearly be articulated in the budget, and they will then be reflected in the main estimates that are tabled after the budget.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: When we do interims in February coming up, will that report be similar to what used to be the mains because that's what happens before the budget, if you follow what I'm saying? What currently, in the present cycle, or the old cycle, we'll call it...? When you did the mains, it was before the budget, so what informed the mains, and then consequent to that, is that the same information that will be used for the interim 2018-19 in February?

In other words, is the interim going to be akin to what the mains used to be?

Mr. Brian Pagan: It will. The key difference is that in the mains, we also provided a narrative explaining additions and subtractions. But because there are no additions and subtractions, because we're flatlining reference levels that have already been approved by

Parliament, we'll simply present the fraction of that. Normally we present three-twelfths or four-twelfths of a requirement, with the narrative, the supporting detail, to follow in the main estimates once those additions and subtractions have been confirmed in the budget.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: When you do the interims for 2018-19, the budget will follow and then the mains will follow the budget.

Mr. Brian Pagan: That's correct.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: My speculation is that the mains going forward will be a much more informed and well-advised process, because the budget will have already been tabled.

• (1115)

Mr. Brian Pagan: It will have two benefits for us. The first is a reconciliation to the budget. I mentioned in my opening remarks that we're working with finance to develop cash tables. The budget is presented on an accrual basis, and the estimates are on cash. We're working this year so that we'll have the budget projections on an accrual basis, but then the budget decisions will turn around and they will be reflected in cash terms. Department X will get \$10 million for such and such initiative. Using that as a starting point for reconciliation, we would be able to replicate that table in the main estimates. There's a very easy crosswalk—same language, same numbers.

Then again, because the budget decisions would precede the main estimates, we would have an opportunity at Treasury Board to work with departments to approve programs and have them reflected in the main estimates for parliamentary approval.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Is this why you say the spring supplementary estimates will not be required going forward?

Mr. Brian Pagan: We anticipate that if we're successful in bringing the budget into the main estimates, that would obviate the need for spring supplementaries.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Do you predict there only being two supplementary periods, an (A) and a (B)?

Mr. Brian Pagan: That would be our intention.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you for that. That will help clarify things.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That's perfect...well, perfect for Kelly.

I just wanted to roughly talk about the additional funds that are requested under the supplementary estimates here. I'm sure some of my colleagues will get into the actual... I hope someone will follow up on this, because I don't think I'm going to give you enough time to answer.

I like how you broke it down on the slide. On slide 7, you have the eight bullets. On slide 8, is that the same spending, just categorized in a different manner, versus new spending?

Mr. Brian Pagan: On slide 7, we itemize by initiative, and then on slide 8 we aggregate. For instance, on slide 7, we see compensation adjustments for the public service at \$654.6 million, and we also see compensation for Canadian Forces members at \$333.1 million. That's the same theme. It's going to two different pots, but it's the same theme. On slide 8, we aggregate that and show you the impact of compensation, at \$1.3 billion.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we have to cut it off there.

Mr. Peterson, when you said you didn't think you'd give them enough time for an answer, I can assure you that—

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I'm right once in a while, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Somewhat following up on the theme of the labour, what percentage of the public service is covered by the \$654.6 million for the compensation changes? That's for those signed between April and July. How many more do we have left to sign, and what are the ballpark financial obligations for the new ones left to be signed?

Mr. Brian Pagan: As of these supplementary estimates (B), we have reached agreement with 20 of the 27 bargaining tables. That totals 156,019 public servants, or 90% of the core public administration. There are seven tables still outstanding, and negotiations are ongoing with those groups. That would include, for instance, border guards and correctional service officers, who are probably the two largest groups.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: A huge percentage of our public service is done.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Ninety per cent is done, and seven tables, 10%, are outstanding.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Right.

PSAC has filed a complaint against the government with the public service relations board about the missed deadlines to implement contracts. They are asking for compensation. What risk are our taxpayers at for this complaint if it proves successful? Why did we not get those agreements honoured?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Mr. McCauley, the situation or the challenge before us is working through implementation of the Phoenix pay system. When the—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Would you say the reason why we weren't able to honour the agreements in time is solely or 99% Phoenix?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Phoenix is the way in which we pay our employees, so the fact that things have not been implemented is—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What risk are we at, compensation-wise, ballpark? Are you able to guess?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I can't comment on a legal issue.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: The \$253 million for anticipated shortfalls, for public insurance, is that from new benefits? Is this from additional public service workers? How did we end up with a quarter of a billion?

• (1120)

Ms. Renée LaFontaine (Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): Yes. It has both aspects, actually.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Break it down for me. How much is new employees? How much is new benefits?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: In terms of the total of \$253 million, about half of that, \$126 million, is increase because of payroll. When you increase your salaries and some of your benefits are based on the salary that you make now, that actually increases the amount of the premiums that you pay for that higher level of salary, so we factor that in. That represents about \$57 million. We've also noted a 7% increase in the cost of health care, so that's part of it as well, and \$48 million is related to that.

The final figure is the... The long-term disability program for senior management in the public service had a premium holiday for a while, because they were actually a little ahead in terms of their planning for funding. That premium has now been put back on, so that's increased as well. Then you net against that the increases that employees are going to pay for their share of the premiums, and the total is \$126 million for that.

The remaining \$126 million is actually a contingency that we put in for the total envelope that we use to plan for making sure that we have money in our reference levels to pay for all these costs, and we have a 5% contingency every year, which is normal.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. Thank you.

In the supplementaries we have under the TBS, there's funding of \$7.7 million for the web renewal initiative. Can you break that down? How much have we spent so far, and will that cover the whole initiative or is that just the first go at it?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: I can do that one as well. Our total ask for web renewal is \$26.2 million over six years. In these supplementary estimates we're looking for \$7.7 million in the second year of the program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What are we going to get for \$7.7 million?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: The focus this year is going to be on... Ten institutions have gone through our web renewal plan and have streamlined their websites, making it easier to find and access information for the key Canadians who use them. We added four new departments this year: Health Canada—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Are you trying to move the departments over bit by bit?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: We're focused on the top kinds of services Canadians look for online.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. That's good.

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: We're focused on 70%—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Right. I'm going to move on. The \$4.3 million for the Canadian digital service, is that like the web initiative? Is that just a start, or is that the be-all and end-all cost?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: It's the same story. The Canadian digital services budget 2017 announced—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is Shared Services or a different department doing that?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: No. We're setting up Canadian digital services inside TBS, and it's going to be a key branch within our organization.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you. Just quickly, there's \$3.7 million for executive leadership development programs within TBS, I'm curious, who exactly will this be used for? When you say "executive", will it be department head level, DM level, and is this considered a taxable benefit if it's a training program to put someone through a specific program like an MBA, CPA, or anything like that?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: That's a good question. We're going to give this training to our own senior managers. We're proposing to train 25 EX-04s and EX-05s this year, and about 50 EX-01s to EX-03s. This will be the first year of the program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's 75 people for \$3.7 million?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. What are we training them for? That's a hefty price tag.

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: We used our own money last year and set up a pilot program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's not your own money. That's the taxpayers' money.

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: In our reference levels last year, we had money to set up a pilot program—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's \$49,000 per person.

The Chair: Even though it's a legitimate ask, Mr. McCauley, we're going to have to get the answer to that in a future intervention, because now we're going to Mr. Blaikie for seven minutes.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. In the estimates, there's a request for about \$330 million for the Canadian Armed Forces pay increase. I wonder if you have a breakdown of how much of that is a retroactive lump sum payment and how much represents ongoing costs for higher wages.

• (1125)

Mr. Brian Pagan: First, to point out, Canadian Forces obviously are not unionized. The negotiations with the Public Service set a pattern that we've applied to the Canadian Forces. These wage adjustments will impact slightly more than 120,000 Canadian Armed Forces members, both regular and reserve. The \$331 million included in these supplementary estimates (B) reflect pay increases effective April 1, 2016, and 2017. Of this amount, \$131.8 million is retroactive for that 2016-17 period. The balance of \$201.3 million is for 2017-18.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: A little more than half are costs that year-to-year are going to be higher. Do those kinds of pay increases trigger cost-containment analysis on the part of Treasury Board or DND? When they're in a situation that they know they're going to be paying more going forward, does that trigger any kind of process where they start looking at other ways they might be able to pay less?

Mr. Brian Pagan: The way we approach collective bargaining is that prior to engaging unions we do analysis internal to Treasury Board Secretariat. We look at current costs, including salaries, benefits, and pensions. We compare that externally to the market and other governments and large employers, and then we will work with

our colleagues in the finance department to develop a mandate, or options for a mandate, that are presented by the Treasury Board president to cabinet for approval.

The analysis you're speaking of has been baked into the fiscal framework and the mandate we currently have to bargain collectively with the public.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: The reason I ask is that there have been some cost-containment measures—I don't what else to call them—on the part of the Canadian Armed Forces in the news this week, about soldiers who participate in special operations and are paid a premium due to the nature of their work and the risks involved. The CAF has recently decided that those soldiers, when injured on the job, will have only six months to heal and get back to the job, and if they don't, then that portion of their salary will be eliminated, which heretofore was not the case.

Is there a connection between higher salaries, these salary increases, and the Canadian Armed Forces looking to reduce those costs for themselves, and as a result, having made that decision?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I'm afraid I can't comment on that. That decision would have been made by Canadian Forces for their members.

What I can tell you is that, again, as we approach collective bargaining, we look at projections and costs and we bake that into the forecast.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Am I understanding from you that the expenditure management branch of Treasury Board, when looking at different departments and seeing that they're going to have an increase in salaries going forward, doesn't have a dialogue with that branch of government to encourage them to take other measures, or talk to them about what measures they might take in order to contain those costs?

Mr. Brian Pagan: If I understand the question, I think in fact that is exactly the case. We, within my branch, examine existing costs, and we examine cost drivers and pressures. We do a comparison to the external market, and we come up with a plan to seek agreement with the unions.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Have you had any conversations from Treasury Board with the Canadian Armed Forces about making a decision, for instance, to terminate a pay premium to certain soldiers after a certain time in order to contain costs, or is Treasury Board not involved in those discussions with departments on cost containment?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I have not been part of those discussions. I can't speak for colleagues elsewhere in Treasury Board Secretariat. We have an office of the chief human resources officer branch—

• (1130)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Would it be normal for Treasury Board to discuss those kinds of measures with a branch of government before a decision is made, or does that come as a surprise to you? Do you find out about it on the news, or is that a conversation you would have had with the Canadian Armed Forces or DND prior to that decision being made?

Mr. Brian Pagan: It's fair to say that most benefit plans or impacts on compensation are discussed in some form or another with Treasury Board, as the employer, before they're taken.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Is that the type of policy that the expenditure management branch of Treasury Board would be encouraging in other departments when that conversation is had, or is—

Mr. Brian Pagan: What I'm trying to convey to you is that in developing a mandate we try to have a full appreciation of the costs of that mandate, so we would not, as a matter of business, seek an agreement and introduce new costs and then turn around and reduce those benefits or cut those costs because all of a sudden it's costing us more money. The costs are forecast into the framework and are part of our mandate going forward.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Would the decision to terminate those benefits for injured soldiers after six months have been part of the discussion? Would that discussion happen at Treasury Board, or is that just internal to the CAF?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Again, I—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I appreciate that it's within a framework, but presumably the ministers at Treasury Board have information on the entire framework. Would that have been included in the framework presented to Treasury Board on this item, or not?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Not to my knowledge, and again, I have not been part of discussions on this initiative. Your questions might best be directed to the department that made that—

The Chair: Luckily the minister will be with us for the second hour, Mr. Blaikie, so you might have an opportunity at that time.

We're now going to Mr. Ayoub.

[Translation]

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you Mr. Chair.

I would like to talk about the targeted admission of 300,000 immigrants in the coming years.

A total of \$196 million has been requested to date in 2017-18 to support the targeted admission of 300,000 immigrants in 2017. As stated on page 1-12 of the 2017-18 Supplementary Estimates (B), the RCMP is requesting \$347,367 to support biometric screening and identification of immigrant applicants.

How many immigrants have been admitted to Canada in each of the last three calendar years, and in the 2017 calendar year to date? How many of them were refugees? What is the total amount of funding requested by the RCMP for the targeted admission of 300,000 immigrants?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Thank you for your questions, Mr. Ayoub.

I have a few key facts, but you would have to ask the RCMP for the other numbers.

As to the immigration levels, the figures for 2016 are as follows.

[English]

I'm sorry. I'm going to do this in English. There were 296,346 landed immigrants, of which 58,435 were refugees.

For 2015, there were 271,845 landed immigrants, of which 35,922 were refugees. For 2014, there were 260,404 landed immigrants, of which 28,622 were admitted under the humanitarian class or were refugees.

[Translation]

The total amount of funding requested by the RCMP can be found in the 2017-18 Supplementary Estimates (B), but you would have to contact the RCMP for the amounts for the previous years.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Okay.

If I understand correctly, the \$347,000 requested by the RCMP in Supplementary Estimates (B) corresponds to the original planned increase in the 2017 budget.

[English]

Mr. Brian Pagan: In fact, it's \$347,000.

•(1135)

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Yes.

Mr. Brian Pagan: It's not millions. It's thousands.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I'm sorry if I said “million”. Maybe it was the translator.

Mr. Brian Pagan: As a result of changes to the immigration plan and the development of new technologies, the RCMP has identified new tools—biometric screenings and some IT systems—that need to be upgraded to allow them to accommodate this volume. What we're seeing is an incremental increase of \$347,000 to their budget for this purpose.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I expect these technologies will speed up the processing of applications and the verification of identity when there is a mass arrival of immigrants, as was the case this summer. We could ask the RCMP that later on.

I would like to move on to another matter that involves infrastructure, namely, the Champlain bridge in Montreal.

To summarize, an additional \$100 million is being requested to cover unanticipated costs. I would like to know what falls under unanticipated costs. The Champlain bridge project will cost several billion dollars, so I would like to know what kind of unanticipated costs that \$100 million will be used for. Could you give us a few examples of those unforeseen events?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Yes, sir. Thank you for your question.

In any major government project, there are always all kinds of unforeseen events.

[English]

We are also dealing with foreign suppliers. We have exchange rate risks. There are interest rate risks. There can be inflationary risks in terms of employment and contracts. If key suppliers go out on strike in the middle of a project and they come back and we have to pay them more money, there are risks related to that. Then there are specific project risks, depending on the type of project. If we are rehabilitating buildings in the parliamentary precinct, for instance, there can be risks related to lead pipes and old fashioned plumbing, and there can be asbestos.

In the case here of infrastructure.... The point here, Mr. Ayoub, is that for all of these projects there are considerable unknowns, so we would build in contingency at the very beginning of the project when it's approved by cabinet, by the Minister of Finance, and by Treasury Board. There are known costs, and then there are certain amounts set aside for contingency to factor in the unknown costs. That's simply prudent project management.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Is there any planning ahead for those unknown costs?

Mr. Brian Pagan: We use our experience every year to improve the ability to anticipate unknown costs, but by definition, unknowns are unknown. We cannot project with perfect clarity the value of the Canadian dollar, interest rates, what we may find when we—

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Can we have the information on how much the unknowns would be from the beginning of that project until now?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Yes. We can certainly get that for you. What I can tell you on the specific projects, Mr. Ayoub, is that in the case of the new Champlain Bridge, part of the project dealt with acquiring land and buildings removed from the bridge, and part of our costs here relate to dealing with contamination in those buildings, which I imagine is asbestos.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Thank you for the information.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to our five-minute rounds of questions, and I understand it's Mr. McCauley for five minutes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks. If we could go back to the funding you were talking about, the training of 75 people. What exactly are we going to get, or are they going to go through for almost \$50,000 a person? Is it like an MBA type, or...?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: No. Actually it's a program that is focused on our senior management competency. Depending on the level, we have different programs for the more junior executives, and more sophisticated programs for the more senior.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What would be in the more sophisticated programs then?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: When we're preparing these employees for their senior leadership roles at the ADM level, we're focused on the key competencies. I'll pull out the list. Excuse me. I'll just—

• (1140)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Maybe you can provide it to the committee afterward, so we can get to other questions.

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: Sure. Mr. McCauley, if I could just add, it's not \$49,000. We'll get you the exact amount per employee.

There are two points I wanted to add that I didn't have a chance to say last time. First, as you know, this is the departments' money, which they are spending to train these executives. We're centralizing it and creating a standard program. That's one point.

The second point is that part of the funding, and I can get you the detailed breakdown, is related to the performance management system that we use to identify these candidates when they're ready for this training. Part of it is that there's a bit of an IT-enabled component there.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Great.

One of my favourites in the estimates, when it comes up every year, is the Department of Agriculture's, and I'll read it: "Grants to foreign recipients for participation in international organizations supporting agriculture". It's sending foreigners to foreign agriculture conferences. It's almost \$3 million. I'm curious. How are we choosing these foreigners to go to foreign agricultural conferences? What benefit is it to Canada?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Mr. McCauley, thank you for the question. That's a very particular question and I'm afraid I don't have the criteria by which the department—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You can get back to me on how we're choosing, from which countries, and which organizations.

Mr. Brian Pagan: I'll direct that question to the department.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Coming back to a couple things in the Treasury Board estimates, there's the back office transformation. We've discussed this before. In this year, in the supps it's \$11 million. How much more do we have to go? What's getting covered in that back office transformation and how much are we going to spend when we're finally finished?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: It's very difficult at this point to talk about the total spend for the whole program. It's a transformation initiative that is involving four big back office areas of the federal public service, so the financial management systems and the business processes, the human resources ones as well as our—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Could you get back to the committee?

Ms. Renée LaFontaine: I could get back to you.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Wonderful.

In the same vein, with Privy Council Office, \$32 million supports the Privy Council's information technology modernization project and other organizational changes. I'm just wondering what the other organizational changes are, and if that is in the same vein as the TBS back office transformation. It's on page 2-83 of the Privy Council estimates. Just get back to us if you don't know.

Mr. Brian Pagan: I have it. I'm just looking for my note here.

This funding supports modernization of their infrastructure as well as implementation of a business continuity plan to have alternate sites in the event that buildings close or systems are not available.

The system upgrades include developing what we call an e-cabinet capacity, so rather than all the binders I have in front of me here, we'll have all this information available on a tablet. It also includes the development of the GIC and Senate appointment website, and transition to a top secret network to be maintained by the Communications Security Establishment.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm out of time. Thank you.

The Chair: Monsieur Drouin, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to get back to the new estimates process and aligning it with the budget, because it's the first time the Government of Canada has embarked on this. It's the right method. I believe it was the right move, but there will be a transition period.

Do you foresee any cultural changes with departments or issues that may arise in that change?

Mr. Brian Pagan: You're quite right to identify the fact that this is going to be a cultural change, a change in the way in which we do business and in long-established practices. We're aware of that.

We have engaged our departmental colleagues. The deputy has communicated with her DM colleagues. We've engaged the CFO community, and so we are building awareness of this, and in so doing, we're identifying established practices that will need to be changed.

The starting point and the reason we are able to bring people along on this is that the status quo as it existed was, if not broken, overly complex. We were making the process harder than it needed to be to bring information to Parliament, so, by properly sequencing the tabling of the documents, we're bringing, I believe, some much-needed clarity and coherence to the timing in which decisions are taken. That in itself is what certainly inspires us to keep going on this.

• (1145)

Mr. Francis Drouin: I completely agree, and I know other governments in Canada have done this as well, so it is the proper thing to do to bring more transparency to Parliament and effectively to Canadians.

You have engaged with the CFO community. Is there extra training provided to, maybe not the CFOs, but to those who will write the documents so that they understand the processes and whatnot?

Mr. Brian Pagan: At this point, because we're focusing on the timing, the challenges for us are fairly straightforward, and there's not a lot of training required. It is simply making crystal clear new timelines and making sure that departments organize their business to be able to reflect those timelines.

As you may recall, timing was one part of a broader reform agenda, and it remains to be seen if or when we'll move forward with other aspects of estimates reform such as, for instance, the introduction of purpose-based votes. Right now we are presenting the information by operating capital and grants and contributions. If we were to change that around and present information by the purpose of the program, then we would be in a world where there

would be training required to make sure that departmental staff appropriately code the information so that it's fed into the systems the right way. We would also have to ensure that they aggregate the programs in the appropriate buckets so that it is consistent with what has been approved by Treasury Board.

That part of the agenda is for down the road. The president has been very clear that we have to get the timing right first. Then with the timing, we can look at some other possibilities.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Just one quick question, and I'm not sure if it's already been answered, but on slide 8, "Compensation and Benefits", there's \$1.3 billion, and on the previous slide we have.... I assume compensation adjustments would be included in there?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Right.

Mr. Francis Drouin: And the Canadian Forces pay increase...?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Right.

Mr. Francis Drouin: What's the third one, because we're not—

Mr. Brian Pagan: It's the public service insurance.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay.

Mr. Brian Pagan: What we've done on that slide, Mr. Drouin, is that we've aggregated the spending by theme, and pay and benefits is considered to be one theme.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay, great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We are back to Mr. McCauley, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I just want to get to the lapsed funding. I think it's \$1.7 billion. Again, this may sound like a broken record, but this came up in our estimates last time about the infrastructure, the lapsed funding. PBO says it was \$1.7 billion. Is that lapsed and re-profiled or lapsed and gone back?

Mr. Brian Pagan: That's lapsed and re-profiled. The government's commitments to infrastructure are very clear, and in most cases there are actually signed agreements with the provinces for these projects. Our challenge in the infrastructure space is that—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I know it's difficult to get out.

Of the \$10.3 billion that was lapsed in 2016-17, how much of that was re-profiled and how much has just lapsed and gone back into general funds?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I'm afraid I wouldn't have that detail on hand, Mr. McCauley, but we can endeavour to get that for you. I think it's fair to say a good portion of the lapsed funding is subsequently re-profiled because it remains for legitimate programs and services such as infrastructure.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. I just want to read a comment from the PBO report.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Sorry, we have that number. I'll check it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Go ahead, finish it, then.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Do you want to speak to that, Darryl?

Mr. Darryl Sprecher (Senior Director, Expenditure Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): Sure.

The total we have for re-profiled funds that were frozen was \$2.1 billion, give or take.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay.

The PBO commented that in your 2017-18 departmental plan, “Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat committed, by May 31, 2018, to include 100 per cent of budget initiatives in the next available estimates,” which we've discussed already. It continues, “This would require the Government to incorporate Budget measures in the corresponding estimates over several weeks, rather than several months.”

Is that going to be doable?

• (1150)

Mr. Brian Pagan: That commitment is aspirational. It's what we want to achieve. We set a very high bar. Mr. Drouin spoke to the cultural changes. We acknowledge the need to work with departments and change the understanding of timing and get them into a position where they can bring things forward quickly. We are working with Finance to—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How realistic is it? It's not judgmental. I know it's turning a huge ship around, but how likely is that to happen?

Mr. Brian Pagan: There was also mention of the fact that other governments have done this, so we have looked at what other governments are doing.

I was at a conference this past August in Winnipeg where I met with provincial counterparts to better understand how they are doing their budgeting process. There is a range of measures available to us that include more timely TB approvals and some other ways of presenting the information to Parliament. We are looking at those, we're studying those other alternatives, and it's part of our ongoing dialogue with the president and with the Department of Finance.

It's challenging. I would not pretend otherwise, but it is doable and we are working our hardest to make sure that we can improve the process beginning in 2018-19.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Great.

Just going back to the supplementary estimates (B), and Foreign Affairs, there's \$18.3 million for co-location and a relocation project at the chanceries. What is a “co-location”, and what are we spending \$19 million on?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Right. In New York, Global Affairs Canada has representatives both to the UN and to another office in New York. What we're doing through this co-location project is that we're bringing those two offices together into one. Instead of paying two rents, we'll have a single property.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How much are we saving on rent by spending \$19 million?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I would have to get that information for you, but there was a cost-benefit analysis to support this and those savings are part of the justification for moving forward.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Can you get back to us on what the rent was and what it will be with the co-location? Is it the same amount of bodies all moving to the same larger building?

Mr. Brian Pagan: I would have to get that information for you. I don't think there's a change in the mission structure.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'll just say thanks for your time.

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Hutchings. Welcome to our committee. You have five minutes.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Great. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have you folks here today.

I'm going to put a little regional focus on this. I'm from Newfoundland and Labrador, and as all my colleagues from coast to coast to coast have said, the RDAs, the regional development associations, are very important. Looking at the estimates, on page 7, the estimates by organization, there's a huge increase for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. It's about 14%, which is wonderful.

Then you reach over into InfoBase, the website, and it's great. There's lots of information, and my understanding is that there's been a big improvement, which makes it easier for folks to get the weeds out of everything. But it's not really quite clear what that \$43 million is going towards.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Thank you for acknowledging the work we've done on InfoBase and what a treasure trove of information it is. I would really recommend the site to the committee.

I'll approach this in two ways. First of all, in these supplementary estimates, we're seeing an increase in ACOA's appropriation of \$40.5 million, and that's for two initiatives: the innovative communities fund and the business development program. Those total \$23.9 million. The innovative communities fund is oriented towards the non-commercial, not-for-profit sector, more in rural communities, and the business development fund is for small and medium-sized enterprises. It provides interest-free, repayable loans. That's \$23.9 million for those programs.

Then we have a reinvestment of receipts from repayable contributions. For instance, the business development program in the past advanced money, and that money is now being repaid, so we see a reinvestment of those receipts totalling \$16.6 million as part of ACOA's appropriation.

That's the supplementary estimates (B).

In terms of being able to follow this money in InfoBase, we aggregate requirements and break them out by program, and we update this information consistent with supply exercises. We started the year with our main estimates numbers. When we tabled the supplementary estimates in May, we updated InfoBase to reflect that spending and we would have updated InfoBase two weeks ago to reflect supplementary estimates (B).

We take those amounts, those reference levels, for ACOA, which are approximately \$350.4 million now, and we disaggregate them by the aggregate programs, and by that I mean we don't itemize—

• (1155)

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: You don't get into the projects.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Exactly. This is very much a work in progress. We've been at this for four years, and I think it's fair to say we've made progress every year in terms of the granularity of the information provided. We're working really hard right now to incorporate results information. Departmental results reports were tabled by the president in the House today. In the coming days, we will be updating InfoBase to reflect that results information by program. We hope to get to the point where we could follow initiatives at the most granular level.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: We know better is always possible.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Our approach is increasingly sophisticated. We have a great team in my shop that's developing InfoBase, and we are acquiring more and more data every year, more information that can be developed for that InfoBase site. It's very much a work in progress. I don't think we'll ever be at a point where we sit back and say that InfoBase is complete. It is almost by definition an ongoing project.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): I have a very quick question about the way the information is presented to us. You've provided it based on the size of the changes. You've highlighted those that are above \$100 million. That's one measure of what's material.

Another measure of what's material is which one has shown the greatest percentage change in respect of its normal budget. In areas where the changes are due to projects maybe going off the rails, or the unexpected, are there any you would like to highlight where there has been a large percentage change vis-à-vis the base budget that we should focus on?

The Chair: I'll have to, Mr. Pagan, get you to provide that to us in writing, since we are out of time.

We have one three-minute intervention left on this particular round, and that goes to Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This is just in the spirit of following up on some regional concerns in the Department of the Environment estimates where there's money for the Lake Winnipeg basin program components. I'm interested in getting a little more detail on what exactly.... There are three separate votes that together total close to \$11 million. I'm just wondering if we have more detail or information on how exactly that money is going to be spent. Is it primarily on research, or are there action items that might help save the lake?

Mr. Brian Pagan: We do have some detail on that. Darryl is looking to pull it out.

My understanding is that it's related to some flood remediation work.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Even if you just want to follow up in writing, that would be fine. I know it's hard to find stuff in the binder on short notice.

There is another quick question I am curious about, and I maybe will talk a bit about it with the minister as well. There is money in the Administrative Tribunals Support Service for the RCMP. It says

“to support the implementation of a new labour relation regime within the RCMP”. Can you explain exactly what the need for this funding is and how it's anticipated that this money will be spent?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Mr. Blaikie, as a result of recent legislation, the RCMP will now have collective bargaining rights. We anticipate a need to be able to deal with the public service staff relations board to administer some of that collective bargaining process with the RCMP. This is funding to simply reflect what we anticipate will be some increased work load or volume as a result of collective bargaining rights being extended to the RCMP.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Would that come largely out of trying to resolve disputes where they don't settle something at the table, or is that...?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Exactly.

● (1200)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Okay.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, we will suspend for a couple moments while the minister and other officials come to the table.

Mr. Pagan, thank you, and thank you to your officials. I understand that you will be with us, as well, for the second hour.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Yes.

The Chair: The other witnesses are excused for now.

We'll reconvene in about two minutes.

● (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1200)

The Chair: Colleagues, I think we'll reconvene now. We're just running a couple of minutes over time.

Again, I remind all colleagues that we do have another committee coming in here at one o'clock sharp. We'll try to stay on time.

Minister, thank you very much, once again, for appearing before our committee. Without any further ado, I'll ask you, if you wish, to introduce the witnesses and your colleagues sitting at the front with you. Then you have approximately 10 minutes, I understand, for your opening statement.

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to be here, back at your committee, again.

I'm joined here by Joyce Murray, our parliamentary secretary; Yaprak Baltacioglu, secretary of the Treasury Board; Brian Pagan, assistant secretary of the expenditure management sector; and Renée LaFontaine, chief financial officer of Treasury Board Secretariat.

I'm here today to talk to you about the supplementary estimates. With these supplementary estimates, the government is seeking Parliament's approval of funding to address matters of importance to Canadians.

[Translation]

This funding is specifically to support infrastructure, to create more opportunities for aboriginal persons, and to provide home care and mental health services.

The funding set out in the Supplementary Estimates will also serve to follow through on the government's plan to grow and strengthen the middle class in Canada.

• (1205)

[English]

We're seeking parliamentary approval of \$4.5 billion in additional spending for 71 organizations. As you know, supplementary estimates present information to Parliament on spending that was either not ready for inclusion in the main estimates or has been since refined to account for new developments in programs or services.

[Translation]

This monitoring ability is one of the most important roles we as parliamentarians serve for our fellow citizens. To do this well, parliamentarians must have access to accurate and timely information on government spending.

[English]

With that in mind, Mr. Chair, we want to make it easier for Parliament to hold government to account. We are always open to the views of parliamentarians about how to go about this. For example, when I came to the committee in March to talk about supplementary estimates (C), Mr. McCauley made two specific requests about the detail and format of the information that we provide. The first request was to break down funding for horizontal initiatives by department, and second, to provide certain information in an Excel format.

I'm happy to say that we've now delivered on both those requests and we're working on more significant changes. To that end, the House recently agreed to change the date by which the main estimates were tabled, from March 1 to April 16. The date that the estimates should be sent to the House by the relevant standing committee moves from May 31 to June 10. This will begin in the fiscal year 2018-19.

Having main estimates follow the budget makes a great deal of sense, on which I think there is broad agreement, and reflects practice elsewhere. In fact, having the main estimates before the budget—I think that I said it at this committee—was asinine and denied Parliament the opportunity to really scrutinize the main estimates in a properly sequenced and logical manner. Adjusting the dates will ensure that the estimates are more closely aligned with the budget. This will help members conduct more detailed reviews of the estimates and to follow the money. In fact, the PBO noted, in its report released earlier this week, that:

Parliamentarians will note that the Government has decided to table these Supplementary Estimates several weeks earlier than usual, thus providing them with greater opportunity to scrutinize proposed spending.

Ultimately, the more information that parliamentarians and Canadians have, the more they will be able to hold the cabinet and government to account.

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to reiterate that I am committed to working with all parliamentarians to continue to strengthen the estimates process.

[English]

My officials and I would be delighted to have your questions now.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you for your brevity. That gives all committee members more time for questions, which we will begin right now.

You may not see it, Mr. Minister, but I'm actually doing a happy dance inside because we normally don't have ministers who are quite as brief in their remarks as you.

We'll start our seven-minute round with Madam Shanahan.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Brison.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here with us today. I would also like to thank the officials with you.

This morning, we heard testimony about compensation adjustments for public servants. That is clearly a very important item in the Supplementary Estimates (B) this year. These pay adjustments for public servants are the result of the recent ratification of collective agreements, but it is a bit unusual for the amount to be so high for a single year.

Can you give us more information about those agreements?

Hon. Scott Brison: When we formed government, in November 2015, we inherited an unfortunate situation. The former government had ignored its duty to negotiate in good faith with the public service. So it was our duty to negotiate with the unions that represent public servants. And we have been very successful. With a lot of work, Treasury Board has negotiated collective agreements with 90% of unionized public servants. This is very important because it has helped us restore a culture of respect towards the public service. We will continue to work closely with the unions that represent public servants.

Moreover, this amount includes a retroactive period, as stipulated in the agreements that were ratified.

• (1210)

[English]

In fact, the previous government had created a situation whereby there were, in some cases, four years of retroactivity. There had been some collective bargaining agreements.

[Translation]

The collective agreements that were signed with certain unions had expired four years earlier.

[English]

Retroactivity, going back four years, creates a situation where you're going back, and if there's a pay increase, it goes back four years. That created the volume, both of transactions and of the quantum of the—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Excuse me, Minister, are you telling us this now adds to the Phoenix problems?

Hon. Scott Brison: Very much so.

The Phoenix system doesn't handle additional transactions very well. It also doesn't handle retroactivity very well. We inherited two situations that were difficult. One was a situation where we had a responsibility to restore a culture of respect with the public sector, to negotiate in good faith, and to achieve collective agreements. We did that, and are doing that. We also inherited a pay system that isn't doing what it ought to, which is to pay people accurately and on time. It's a pay system that does not handle either retroactivity or additional transactions well.

It was, in some ways, a perfect storm of two converging bad situations. The extra burden of the volume of transactions created by the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements has added to the queue in the Phoenix system. I know that my colleague, Minister Qualtrough, is going to be meeting with you sometime in the next period to discuss that. The situation is completely unacceptable, as was the situation of public servants not having collective agreements for up to four years, but we're working and doing our utmost to fix it.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Minister, for that.

On that note, there is a better way of doing things. These large, transformative IT projects that attempt to do all kinds of things in a bid to save a few pennies are penny-wise and pound foolish, one might say.

We had some testimony a few weeks ago from Mr. Murphy regarding the “agile” method, tackling things in small, manageable pieces. With the time that we have left, could you talk a bit about the TBS initiative?

• (1215)

Hon. Scott Brison: I'm actually glad your committee is looking at new approaches to digital government, and it's something on which I'd like to have a longer conversation with you sometime. Canada's government is not the first government.... I'm not going to be partisan on this. Governments around the world have struggled with IT transformation.

The worst U.S. digital IT disaster was on October 1, 2013, when the Obama administration brought in Obamacare and 4.7 million Americans tried to register on the website healthcare.gov. Only six of them—six Americans—succeeded in registering.

It was the worst government IT failure in U.S. government history, but it was also the best thing that ever happened to U.S. digital government, because what the government did was reprioritize digital government. They started something called the government digital services unit, 18F.

We've recently created the Canadian version, the CDS. It basically takes a totally different approach to digital government, including in procurement and project management. That's something I would really like to drill down on with this committee sometime, because all parties and members of Parliament ought to be aware of some of the changes that other countries have gone through. That's something your committee may want to study. We're learning a great deal about what happened in the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and even Estonia, for instance. My Treasury Board secretary has actually been there recently to observe what they've done. They're leaders globally in digital—

The Chair: We'll have to—

Hon. Scott Brison: I love that file though.

The Chair: I'll take this opportunity, quite frankly, to give a little shout-out to Minister Brison.

As I've told many members of this committee before, Mr. Murphy, who gave the presentation on agile, contacted me several months ago. After speaking with him for just a few moments, it became clear to me that this is something any government would be wise to pursue. To his credit, Minister Brison—when I went to see him about this and suggested that perhaps he might want to pass this along to his deputies so that we could get some witnesses in front of us—took this initiative on. We've had Mr. Murphy here, and I think agile is happening, so Mr. Minister, on behalf of everyone who was involved in the IT transformation thing, good on you. I say that in a non-partisan manner, because I think it's going to benefit everybody around this table.

With that—probably the last time you'll get a shout-out from me, Minister—we'll go to Mr. McCauley for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Welcome back, Minister. I'll let you know that Mr. Pagan took your glory earlier, about arranging the Excel. He said it was all on him, against your best wishes.

I want to get away from the partisan points and back to the estimates. Under CBSA, there's \$1.6 million for funding to build capacity to address drug-impaired driving, and there's a similar line for the RCMP.

When will that money be rolled out? We have legalization barreling down on us very fast. Regardless of where you sit on the legalization-decriminalization question, there is a lot of concern about impaired driving: how it's actually detected, whether we're able to detect impairment versus merely blood level. How fast is this money going out? Is it sufficient money? Why is there so much to CBSA and comparatively little to the RCMP compared with the CBSA?

Hon. Scott Brison: Three organizations will share about \$20 million to increase law enforcement capacity to address the issue—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's about \$6 million, then. Where's the other \$14 million?

Hon. Scott Brison: The \$20 million, I'm informed, goes to Public Safety Canada, RCMP, and CBSA. These monies will be used to address the issue of drug-impaired driving.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Public Safety Canada, I assume, is education, but this is actual enforcement.

Hon. Scott Brison: That's right. It's for both. It's a horizontal initiative that involves education but also enforcement, making sure that they have the tools, including the technology required.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm specifically asking about the \$5 million for the RCMP. How fast are we going to get this out the door? It's barrelling down on us pretty fast. Again, this is a non-partisan thing.

Hon. Scott Brison: Absolutely.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's a true safety thing.

Hon. Scott Brison: I agree, it's very important. In terms of specifically when this will be implemented, that will be a question that my colleague, Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale, would be able to answer.

In terms of the funding, as it moves forward, we approve the funding to RCMP, CBSA, and Public Safety Canada. Brian may have more granularity on that.

Mr. Brian Pagan: Thank you, Minister.

With respect to the public safety portion, training is a big component of the requirement. They're also procuring equipment for police forces across the country. They're looking at increasing the number of standardized field sobriety screening devices.

• (1220)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is that under the \$14 million?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Yes.

They're going to be procuring 3,300 oral screening devices.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: As we're short of time, can you provide that to the committee?

Hon. Scott Brison: Yes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Throughout the estimates, regarding funding for adapting to the impacts of climate change, there is \$2.5 million in the Department of Health.... It's spread throughout.

How are we measuring the metrics of adapting to the impacts of climate change so that we know this money is going to actual public good rather than waste? What kinds of metrics do we have to measure it?

Hon. Scott Brison: It's a very important question. Increasingly, because of the effects of climate change, the increase in the severity and frequency of weather patterns as a result of climate change, we see communities across Canada being impacted. It has an impact on indigenous communities, for which we're responsible. It has an impact on infrastructure projects, community emergency planning—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How are we measuring the success of the money we're spending, though?

Hon. Scott Brison: In terms of measuring—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's adapting to the impacts. How are we spending the money to adapt to the impacts? That's what I'm asking. How are we measuring the success?

Hon. Scott Brison: It's an important question, but in terms of... The idea with adaptation is not simply to respond to the crises when they occur. It's actually preparing for the crises, including preparing infrastructure in advance to be able to withstand these crises.

We have a results agenda as a government, but Kelly, some of this is qualitative as well. In terms of measuring a specific result around increased climate resiliency of infrastructure, some of it is quantitative, in terms of indicators, and some of it requires research.

There's a material lab at Dalhousie University in which we invested that is doing research now on—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Maybe it's just a not-well-explained line item in the estimates.

Hon. Scott Brison: Yes, but it is an important one.

I tell you, if you want to talk about adaptation, Kelly, there's—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'll just move on, because we're very short on time.

Hon. Scott Brison: But it's important too that we share best practices.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Brison, please let me move on with my questions. Thank you.

Hon. Scott Brison: It was a very good question.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Under House of Commons we have \$2.7 million for “Funding for the strategy for social media and the modernization of the House of Commons’ Web presence”. What social media are we doing for \$2.7 million to promote the House, and do we believe that's a good use of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Scott Brison: If it's the House of Commons, that would be a question for the Board of Internal Economy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay.

Hon. Scott Brison: We are investing more in social media as a government, as I believe most governments would be doing, because we're seeking to reach Canadians in the way they are increasingly seeking to participate.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You'd be surprised to learn that this is the opposite of what we heard on the committee from the advertising study, but let's move on.

Hon. Scott Brison: In terms of social media, we're doing more. One of the reasons we're doing more, Kelly—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I have a last quick question.

Hon. Scott Brison: —with social media is that it's a two-way communication. The previous government wasn't as interested in that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

I have a very last quick question. Who approved \$5 million for a two-week hockey rink on the grounds outside, when we have so many issues with safe water, housing, and everything else? We're going after diabetic sufferers, but we're spending \$5 million for a hockey rink. I know it's not you, but good Lord, who?

Hon. Scott Brison: I have to say you're on thin ice with this one.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Well played!

Hon. Scott Brison: This is a question I would take to your member on the Board of Internal Economy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's a fair answer.

Hon. Scott Brison: I look forward to taking my three-and-a-half-year-old daughters Rose and Claire there sometime this winter, putting them on skates for the first time, and having them skate on Parliament Hill as part of Canada's—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: They're not skating yet...? For shame.

Hon. Scott Brison: I'm trying to get them into skiing, because I don't want to sit in a cold rink all the time.

The Chair: We're going now to Mr. Blaikie for a seven-minute round.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon, Minister.

I want to pick up on the conversation we had somewhat earlier about the injustice for the public sector involving Phoenix and what it means in terms of the government's delivering on its obligations to public servants under collective agreements. Thank you for your frank assessment of the failure of that system to do so.

Your government has chosen to carry through a decision of the Harper government to deem civilian members of the RCMP into the public service, and the deadline for that is early next year—sometime in the spring. One consequence of it, presumably, would be that those civilian members would then be transferred onto the Phoenix payroll system. Currently, they are on a well-functioning payroll system.

I wonder whether, given your remarks about the inadequacy of Phoenix to make good on our obligations to the public servants for doing good work, you could commit to not transferring those employees onto the Phoenix payroll system until the issues with the payroll system are resolved.

● (1225)

Hon. Scott Brison: First of all—and Yaprak will assist on this as well—we can all agree that the situation with Phoenix is totally unacceptable, and we're working to fix it. The frustration we have now in terms of some of the collective bargaining agreements, after having negotiated in good faith, is to see that the system is facing more challenges.

I believe there's been a strengthening of the governance and the reportage around Phoenix, and we're making progress.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: But I think the question for these people, who currently are getting paid well and who are on a payroll system that works, is why they would be transferred onto a payroll system that by the government's own admission is really not working, and why the transfer of their payroll wouldn't be delayed until such time as the government can provide assurances that the payroll system will function.

Hon. Scott Brison: I'm going to ask Yaprak to reply.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu (Secretary of the Treasury Board of Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat): This question came to me in the last few weeks, and I asked exactly the same question because unless we can have the assurance that their pay won't be interrupted, there's no particular need to put the employees in hardship nor to add further pressure to the Phoenix system. You are right.

I was asked that question and that was my answer. We're working through it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you. I am very glad to hear that. I had written the minister on this issue some time ago and didn't get that clear an answer.

Can I just understand from the minister, then, that there is a commitment not to transfer them onto Phoenix until such time as the issues with Phoenix are resolved?

Hon. Scott Brison: We're working on it, and as Yaprak said, that's what—

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: That's basically what my question was, and I haven't received an answer.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm going to take that as a “yes” from the minister, unless he says “no”.

Hon. Scott Brison: There's a reason why Treasury Board Secretariat is one of the top 100 places to work in Canada. It's because of Yaprak Baltacioglu.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm going to call that a commitment not to transfer civilian members over to Phoenix, unless you object.

Hon. Scott Brison: I can tell you that if—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm not hearing an objection.

Hon. Scott Brison: We don't want to add to the burden of Phoenix right now at a time when we're still working through the problems. It makes sense, and so I would agree with your assessment.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much.

On another related matter that has to do with categorizing employees and potential cost to government, there's an issue for employees of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories who are looking at being transitioned out of the public service pension plan that they've been a part of for a very long time. I understand there have been discussions with Treasury Board, the Prime Minister's Office, as well the natural resources minister and his office about whether or not those employees would be allowed to continue in the public service plan.

My understanding is that if they did, there would be no significant cost to government, as it's already in the contract that the employer is responsible for providing some kind of pension plan. Can you confirm that there are no significant cost implications for government if those employees stay within the federal plan?

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: A decision to transfer their pensions was made on this one. Very recently, I had pretty senior representation from the union, and I took on that I will get back to them. I don't have a good enough answer for you, but I will get back to them.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Have you done an assessment of what the cost to government would be in allowing them to remain in the plan?

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: I'm sure the costing is done, but I just don't have it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Okay. Could you provide that to the committee in writing?

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: Could I first figure out what we have, and then if we have it, we will?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Once you have it, you could provide it to the committee.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: Yes.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much. Do you have a sense of a timeline?

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: No, not really. I already have a commitment to get back to a union leader. I will get back to her first, and then we will report back.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: All right. Thank you very much. I look forward to that, when you have it.

One of the questions we got into a little earlier with some of your senior department people was about the money in the estimates for wage increases for folks in the Canadian Armed Forces. I understand that approximately two-thirds of that is for ongoing cost increases.

This week in the news, we heard that the Canadian Armed Forces has made some cost-containment decisions that, unfortunately, are going to land on the shoulders of injured soldiers, particularly those who are in special operations and are paid a premium for the nature of the work they do, and the danger involved in the work they do. Whereas before they would continue to earn that premium if they were injured after six months, now the Canadian Armed Forces has decided to terminate that extra part of their salary for the nature of the work they do.

I wonder to what extent you or Treasury Board is involved in those kinds of cost-containment decisions. Is there any relation between the fact that salaries are going up, and a new salary cost-containment measure is being introduced around the same time?

•(1230)

Hon. Scott Brison: There are a couple of things.

First is that clearly we want to do everything we can to demonstrate respect for the men and women in uniform who defend Canada's interests here and abroad.

Second, the chief of the defence staff is responsible for the administration of the Canadian Armed Forces policies. The Minister

of National Defence has asked him to look into this, and that's being looked into now.

I can't give you any more clarity on that now, but my colleague Minister Sajjan has asked his chief of the defence staff to look into it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you.

Sadly, I think our time is at an end.

The Chair: It is.

Mr. Whalen, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for coming, Minister Brison. It's always great to have you here.

I'll follow up on something Ms. Shanahan was asking about earlier.

In the breakdown of the retroactive pay adjustments with respect to union agreements that weren't negotiated and weren't signed over the past years, about how much of this \$650 million relates to retroactive pay from the previous government?

Hon. Scott Brison: It goes back. These are significant numbers, because as I said, we went from no public servant having a collective agreement to 90% now in a fairly short period of time. All of them had some level of retroactivity, some going back four years.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: Compensation benefits is \$1.3 billion. That's \$655 million for pay increases for the federal public service, \$333 million for DND, again pay increases for the forces, and \$65 million for the RCMP.

The rest of it, \$253 million, is the employer's share of the insurance, so that's not collective bargaining. It's what we owe.

Mr. Nick Whalen: What percentage of that would be for the period of time, say, preceding November 2015? Is it broken down that way?

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: Do you have it?

Mr. Brian Pagan: Mr. Whalen, we'll get you precise numbers, but approximately 40% is the retroactive component. There was a similar question with respect to the Canadian Forces, where they're seeing pay increases this year of \$331 million. Of that, \$131 million was the retro portion, and \$201 million is for 2017-18.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Speaking of \$200-million problems that we're left to correct, another one is obviously Phoenix. When we look at Phoenix, something that's been raised to me is that with respect to retroactive pay, there are certain types of government retroactive pay.... It's either acting pay or retroactive duty pay, or some of these things. It's difficult for me to understand, as someone coming from the private sector, how this relates to bonuses, whether or not the types of ways in which federal civil servants are compensated after the fact are really transparent, and how that plays into the way Phoenix needs to be customized to address these sorts of unique government-type pay situations that I don't understand.

Hon. Scott Brison: That's a very good point, Nick. When you negotiate with the public sector unions, you have your economic increase component, which is fairly simple. It's a percentage. But then there are other areas where there are agreements, sometimes there's a signing bonus, particularly if there's been a retroactivity issue, or there may be some other form of compensation. Every one of those changes involves a financial cost, but also a transaction. In some cases we would have, with a collective bargaining agreement, five or six individual transactions in addition to the pay increase.

Keep in mind, when we formed government there were 27 collective bargaining agreements that had expired, with 15 bargaining units. When you take 27 of those, with every one of those involving multiple transactions, it does put a lot of burden on the pay system. There's no way around it. The public sector pay system, public sector negotiations, are complex, and the pay system as it is working now doesn't handle complexities well. We're working on this.

I must say, Minister Qualtrough is working very hard on this, as are her officials, and across government.

• (1235)

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: Just for Mr. Whalen, I think your point is well taken. When it becomes so many years of retroactivity, the transparency for the employees goes out, and as well for parliamentarians and for the government overall. It would be ideal if we could actually negotiate these things before they expire, so that employees can start seamlessly from one collective agreement to another.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Going forward, we look forward to your being successful in that endeavour.

Hon. Scott Brison: As we do that, it's a good point, because there would be less burden, as we renegotiate or negotiate new collective bargaining agreements, imposed on the pay system as a result, because there would be less retroactivity. We'll get there.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Just moving on, then, to sort of the overall estimates process, it has been really interesting for us, as new members of the committee, seeing the evolution of the estimates process. We know that your ultimate goal isn't simply to have the estimates tabled two weeks after the budget. In the past, you mentioned having them tabled simultaneously. Is that still a goal?

Is this something we're looking forward to in the timeline of this parliament, or a future one? Or is that no longer a goal?

Hon. Scott Brison: The idea is that we want as high a percentage of the budget initiatives in the main estimates as possible. That's good from an operational efficiency perspective, but it's also good from a transparency perspective. In the past, your committee would study the main estimates, then the budget would come out, and all your work on the main estimates would be rendered basically irrelevant. Aligning them time-wise.... The first thing is getting the sequencing right. After that the departments, particularly TBS and Finance as agencies, work very closely together.

I really like the Australian system. They basically do it simultaneously.

Over time, I really believe that the level of co-operation between Finance, Treasury Board, and departments, will mean it will get closer and closer—

Mr. Nick Whalen: Is it the departments that are going to provide the initial cost estimates, or is it Finance and Treasury Board doing the heavy lifting on their estimate of how budget changes are going to affect their future expenditures?

Hon. Scott Brison: I think it's all three. You have departments with their responsibility. I think in the future you're going to see greater granularity built into budget asks so that departments will think through their whole system of developing budget asks in advance, building into them some of the work that Treasury Board and Finance do subsequently in the current system. I think you're going to see a far greater amount of granularity built into the system and the process—

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you very much.

We've seen from the new members in the committee today how important this is and how they want to see project-specific funding, because it goes to the heart of their questions. We look forward to that. Thank you very much.

Hon. Scott Brison: It also speaks to the heart of Parliament and your responsibility to scrutinize but also to your authority over the purse strings. It's a good thing for any government, and it's a great thing for Parliament to have more clarity and transparency.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

If I may, I have a quick extraneous comment before I go to our five-minutes rounds here. It was sparked by Mr. McCauley's comments on the impact of climate change. My frustration has always been...because you're talking about the frustrations within government.

A fire chief was in my office yesterday talking about the problems that occurred with the flooding of the Ottawa Valley. He pointed out to me that they ran out of 70,000 sandbags within a day. Of his own volition, he started contacting various provincial governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta to try to get other sandbags, because they had experienced their own flooding problems.

Lo and behold, he found out we can't do that because we have to go through requisition processes through each provincial government and back to the feds. One of the provincial bureaucrats gave him the number of a private manufacturer of sandbags. He made a phone call and the sandbags were on a plane within the hour.

If your government can do anything to speed up the process that avoids this type of thing, I think we'd all be better off. That's my comment, and I'll stick by it.

Mr. Blaikie, your time's been ceded to you by Mr. McCauley, I understand. You have five minutes.

• (1240)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much,

Thanks to Mr. McCauley.

I want to come back to some issues related to the RCMP, and thank you again for your commitment not to transfer civilian members of the RCMP on to Phoenix before the system has been fixed.

In the estimates, and we touched on this briefly, there is money, just under \$400,000, for the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada to support the implementation of a new labour relations regime within the RCMP. Of course, that funding is for what we could call back-end issues, or it's funding for when things go wrong and they need to be resolved between management and labour.

I wonder if you could comment on the efficiency.... I don't see money allocated to help train RCMP management on how to successfully implement a new labour relations regime in terms of learning how to deal with a union in the workplace and trying to have good labour relations. I wonder if some of the money that's allocated here for the back-end problems perhaps wouldn't need to be spent if RCMP management had training from outside the organization on how to do labour relations right.

This is an evaluative judgment that I don't particularly expect you to endorse, but my experience through the process on Bill C-7 and seeing the attitude of RCMP management in terms of how they treated RCMP members trying to organize was that this is not a management that understands what it means to have a union in the workplace, and they are not really ready to work constructively with a union. It seems to me that some upfront investment in training would be appropriate and would hopefully mean that we would see fewer line items in estimates related to resolving disputes.

I wonder if you could comment on the lack of money for that upfront bit.

Hon. Scott Brison: Bill C-7 was groundbreaking in that it provided for the first time an opportunity for the RCMP to unionize, and of course, whether it's in the RCMP or any department or agency of the Government of Canada, we want to see respectful, progressive labour relations. Bill C-7, as I said, is a significant step forward, and it will most definitely have an impact, as you're now building a labour management regime wherein there will be union representation.

I believe that in the last two years we've made progress writ large in terms of our relations with the public sector unions as a government and—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: What I see in these estimates is planning for when things go wrong. In estimates, when can we expect to see planning for how to make things go right so that you don't need money on the back end?

Hon. Scott Brison: I'm going to ask Yaprak to intervene. One thing is that Bill C-7 is quite recent, so there are going to be a lot of changes in the coming months and even years as this shift occurs.

Yaprak might have some thoughts on this.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: You're totally right. It's better to invest in good labour relations before you end up in a dispute.

We will provide the RCMP with support from Treasury Board Secretariat. We have a good labour relations group and we're the

ones who actually negotiate all the major agreements, so we will be supporting the RCMP. It's a culture change. It is a systems change. They're going to have to go through that, but it's not asking for new money. They have human resource capacity. It's how they use that human resource capacity so that they can actually deal with a unionized workforce. We're going to help them.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Right, so in spite of no dedicated resources or new resources, there are efforts being undertaken.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: We usually like to see people retool themselves before asking for money.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: That's fair enough.

I'll just change tack a little.

The Chair: Be very brief.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: One of the things that happened when there was a clampdown on the temporary foreign worker program was that subscription to the international mobility program went up a fair bit. One of the issues with the IMP is that there is a lot less documentation in terms of workers' skills and labour market demand within Canada for the occupations that they're coming here to work within.

There's about \$83 million being allocated to the TFW and the IMP program. Will some of the money that's being allocated be dedicated to providing better data on workers who come in through the IMP so that we know what they're doing, what their skills are, why they're being brought here, and why it was that the Canadian labour market wasn't able to provide for the positions that they're here to fill?

• (1245)

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Blaikie, we'll have to pass it over to Mr. Drouin, who might want to follow up on that question, but we're completely out of time with you.

Mr. Francis Drouin: If the minister wants to answer, sure. If not, maybe you can ask the minister responsible for that particular department.

I want to go back to the rationale for changing the way we do the estimates process. Minister Brison, you've been around for longer than I have.

A voice: Longer than anyone.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Without mentioning years, you've been in the opposition, you've been in government, you've been back in the opposition, and now you're back in government. In your previous experience, was there any effort to make those particular changes?

I know everyone on this committee has read the 2012 study. At the time the study was done, I believe the chair was Mr. Martin. Was there any move or any consensus built with all parties in Parliament to get this moving?

Hon. Scott Brison: There was a lot of discussion around that in the past. InfoBase was a significant step forward in terms of transparency, but in terms of the sequencing of budgets and estimates, that's something we've seen a demand for, for a long time. Part of my mandate letter was to actually address some of the issues around estimates reform. I'm awfully pleased that we were able to get that done. Now I want us to make it work really well and I want us to do more over time.

One of the things we're doing now is the departmental results frameworks, which will enable your committees to actually have a better line of sight into what a department is doing and how it is doing, how it's achieving its functions, with better explanation and better indicators to help measure the effectiveness of departments in terms of delivering results. I really feel very strongly about this. I've been part of two governments but I spend most of my time here, and you were kind enough to mention how long I've been around.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I didn't say how long.

Hon. Scott Brison: Part of my DNA after being around as long as I've been is that I think very strongly of the importance of Parliament and of members of Parliament in all parties.

Members of Parliament on the government side have a responsibility to hold their government to account as well as members of the opposition, and strong committees provided with good information transparently is an essential part of a strong democratic system. So I feel good about this.

This is significant progress. Brian has been around longer than me probably. Let me tell you, within the public service they are as excited as you can be about things like estimates. But the people within the public service actually are excited about having greater transparency and logical presentation of these, because as public servants they want to make a difference. They want to be able to show that they are making a difference and to explain that they are making a difference.

I think this is good for the public service as well as for Parliament.

Mr. Francis Drouin: You have mentioned the DPRs. I think they were presented in the House today.

• (1250)

Hon. Scott Brison: Yes. It was earlier today.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Do they reflect the new changes we're talking about?

Hon. Scott Brison: Yes. We have meetings with the Treasury Board cabinet committee where ministers and their senior officials come in and present their departmental results frameworks. The old system was so complex and difficult to understand that neither public servants nor ministers.... It was really tough.

This new approach is so much more understandable, transparent, and logical that there's a lot of enthusiasm with public servants around this.

Ms. Yaprak Baltacioglu: And ministers....

Hon. Scott Brison: And ministers too. It's good for accountability.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McCauley, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Because the minister mentioned his daughters, I'm going to take the opportunity. I know my wife is probably listening intently. It's her birthday today, so happy birthday, Sasha.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm going to frame that from Hansard and give that to her as a gift.

As much as I enjoy sparring with the minister over estimates, I want to introduce, please, my motion from December 8 that we put on notice.

I'll read it out:

That the Committee invite the President of the Treasury Board of Canada to appear before the Committee by December 8, 2017, to provide an update on the progress made as well as provide a detailed plan to implement the recommendations made by the committee to strengthen the disclosure and protection regime under the Public Servants Disclosure Act....

I know we're running very short on time.

The Chair: I'm going to suspend for about a minute while we distribute a copy of that motion, Mr. McCauley. I want to consult with my clerk. I believe it's in order, but I want to make sure of that.

The motion is in order. I will entertain anyone who wants to put their name on a speaking list. I, obviously, have Mr. McCauley to speak to it first. Is there anyone else?

Mr. McCauley, it's up to you.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

I have to express my disappointment that we're not seeing more action from the government on this unanimous report. We all worked very hard. We had a lot of witnesses come forward telling us stories about how governments—all governments, not just current but previous and the government before that—had destroyed their lives for daring to come forward to be whistle-blowers.

We put through a very important document that was well received by a lot of the witnesses. Duff Conacher, I'll comment for him, said that the committee report was robust and that if they put in everything they put in the report, "We'll have a world-class system if they implement this."

Public Services International rates Canada among the very worst for whistle-blowers behind Zambia, Uganda, Serbia, South Africa, Malaysia, and Kosovo, so I think it's incumbent on us to follow through on our unanimous report, and that we actually put some teeth into it.

I think 25 of the 34 recommendations we put forward require legislative amendments, so it's not just the internal programs that have been suggested in the minister's letter to us. It needs a lot more than that. I assume you will put through a motion to adjourn. I would like to have a vote on this. I will take—and I think I speak for the NDP and the witnesses as well—a motion for adjournment as an outright rejection of this motion and a rejection of the unanimous report we put forward from this committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there brief remarks?

Seeing none, we will now go immediately to a vote. That is non-debatable.

Mr. McCauley, do you care to have a recorded vote?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'd prefer that, yes.

The Chair: It will be recorded. I'll turn it over to my clerk to administer. We're voting on Mr. McCauley's motion that the President of the Treasury Board appear before the committee by December 8.

Hon. Scott Brison: It's obvious, Mr. Chair, but I am here and he could ask the question.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: He should ask the question.

The Chair: The motion is as Mr. McCauley has presented it, and the vote will now take place and be recorded.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 2)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now, colleagues—

Hon. Scott Brison: I can speak to this, because I don't want Kelly to leave here mad.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm not mad.

Hon. Scott Brison: I can speak to the point. I'd like to speak to it.

• (1255)

The Chair: Minister, if you have a couple of minutes, I'll certainly allow you that time. We do have to be out of here to allow another committee to come in.

Hon. Scott Brison: On the whistle-blowers act, the reality is that under the previous government, it ignored, for several years, the legislative requirement to review the act, and it didn't do anything with it.

I appreciate the question. Our government is committed to ensuring that whistle-blowers in government have the protection they deserve. That's for good government.

We appreciated the committee's report. There are useful recommendations to improve the regime in our public sector. We're taking concrete steps, including improving guidance, increasing awareness and training, and enhancing public reporting. In fact, last evening I had dinner with some public sector labour leaders, and we discussed this. One of the things I discussed was whistle-blower protection. I told them that I want to sit down with the unions to explore what we can do to strengthen the regime. That's something

the previous government also didn't do a lot, sit down with the unions.

We're engaging also the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner. I want to sit down with him on this issue in the near future.

We're initiating meetings across government with heads of human resources to ensure that employees and managers are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities in terms of whistle-blower protection and that they have the proper training and tools. Our chief human resources officer is examining how to best enhance public reporting so that we're able to publish the data.

I want to tell you that this is an issue that is important to me. It's one I know the committee has worked hard on. I intend to sit down with the public sector unions to discuss further what we can achieve on this in terms of strengthening the protections.

You may not have won that vote, Mr. McCauley, but you got your wish. I appeared, and we had a chance to talk about this.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I just want to respond to your comments.

I am disappointed. I think the public service is disappointed. You can say that you've consulted with the unions, but I think if you talk to our witnesses and everyone else, you'll hear that.

I want to quote from Mr. Friday, the Public Service Integrity Commissioner. He said, "I am disappointed that the Government response to the Committee's report", tabled in May, "proposed no legislative changes". As I mentioned, 25 of our 34 recommendations require legislative amendments. That's not going to be addressed by your response. Mr. Friday said, "I welcome and support", yes, but also "I am disappointed that the opportunity was not taken to make formal legislative changes to improve the whistleblowing system at this time."

I want to finish with a quote from one of our witnesses, David Yazbeck. He said:

The last thing I want to say, members of the committee, if I can be a little strong and almost emotional here, is that whistle-blowers are heroes. They risk their families, they risk their careers, and they risk financial stability in order to make the operation of government better and therefore improve the lives of Canadians.

This is not for whistle-blowers. This is for Canadians.

The system...doesn't work. It needs to be fixed. This committee has a golden opportunity to do that. I would urge you to listen to people like us and do that. This is not only better for whistle-blowers. This is also better for Canadians.

We've let these witnesses down and we've let whistle-blowers down, and I'm disappointed.

The Chair: On that note, we are adjourned.

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