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CANADA

## **Board of Internal Economy**

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TRANSCRIPT

**Thursday, November 29, 2018**

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## Board of Internal Economy

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• (1120)

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Speaker of the House of Commons):** This meeting of the Board of Internal Economy is called to order.

First of all, we have the minutes of the previous meeting. Are there any issues with the minutes of the previous meeting? No. Is there any business arising from the previous meeting?

I don't see any, so we'll now go on to the first presentation. We have the Joint Interparliamentary Council.

Do you want to lead off on this, Charles? Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charles Robert (Clerk of the House of Commons):** Before going into the details of the review of the proposals and their impact on the 2019-20 main estimates, I want to make a general comment.

[English]

As you will see, there are a number of submissions to be presented today before you consider the proposed main estimates. We have thought carefully about these initiatives and have consulted with all House officers to ensure that what we are proposing will meet the needs of members. This is aligned to our new vision of providing outstanding services to members and their staff so that they are properly supported in fulfilling their parliamentary functions.

We have also looked at the financial implications of these submissions with a view to remaining within the existing funding allocation of the House. Without pre-empting your decision on these submissions, I am pleased to point out that these expenditures proposed for the main estimates of 2019-20 will be no greater than our main estimates for the current year.

[Translation]

My team and I are ready to answer all your questions.

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We'll go to the presenters we have before us this morning.

We have Yasmin Ratansi, Member of Parliament, Chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We also have Colette Labrecque-Riel, Clerk Assistant and Director General, International and Interparliamentary Affairs, and the Honourable Hedy Fry, who is the Director, OSCE PA, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association.

Good morning.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel (Clerk Assistant and Director General, International and Interparliamentary Affairs, House of Commons):** Good morning.

Before having Ms. Ratansi begin her presentation, I want to confirm something. Normally Mr. Stanton would have been here as the co-chair of the Joint Interparliamentary Council, but he's unavailable for this meeting. I just want to confirm that, indeed, the Joint Interparliamentary Council did study these two proposals at its meeting of May 30. The council had a discussion in terms of the timing of these conferences. The council is satisfied that the administration is in a position to be able to support appropriately these two large conferences. The council is also satisfied that the budget proposals presented to it were prepared in line with past practices and parameters for previous conferences that the Parliament of Canada has hosted.

I will now turn the floor over to Ms. Ratansi.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Chair, Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association):** Thank you, Colette.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for allowing us this opportunity to present before you the ask for hosting the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 2021.

Here's a little background on why we are here to ask. In July 2017, in Winnipeg, the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which is made up of the provinces, territories and federal representatives, discussed the possibility of hosting the 2020 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference if changes were adopted at the preceding conference for a different model of hosting this conference.

The last time Canada hosted this conference was in 1994, in Banff. Then, in 2004, Canada hosted EXCO, which is the executive committee, in Ottawa, and then it did the two conferences in a split between Quebec City and Toronto. Since then, we have refused to host the conference until such time as changes are made to the hosting parameters.

Unlike conferences of other associations, CPA's conference hosting parameters required that the host country be responsible for accommodation and meal costs for all delegates. After several years of negotiation, in November 2017, in Bangladesh, Canada with other like-minded partners succeeded in introducing the new conference model. This is a two-year pilot project. Under the new model, the host would no longer be responsible for accommodation and all meals of all delegates.

In July 2018, in Ottawa, the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association accepted to offer to host the conference in Halifax in January 2021. Since there will be no conference in 2018, the first conference using the new model will be 2019 in Uganda. The executive of the CPA has accepted the proposal of the Canadian region to host the conference in January 2021 under the terms and conditions of the new funding model.

Having succeeded in bringing about these major changes, it is important for Canada to organize this conference in 2021 since we have not hosted it in 16 years. As well, we are the architects of this new model for the conference, and we would like to test it where necessary and to help improve it going forward.

The hosting of this conference by Canada will help demonstrate our leadership role in the Commonwealth, and we have done a lot to move the leadership and governance needle forward. There will be approximately 500 participants. The conference will consist of six elements: the executive committee; small branches conferences; the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians steering committee; plenary and workshop sessions; the general assembly meeting; and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table conference.

The estimated budget before you has been reviewed and approved by the Joint Interparliamentary Council and by the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and efforts have been made in the budget to reduce the costs. The funding model for the Canadian region involves a fifty-fifty sharing between the federal branch and the 13 provincial and territorial branches. As part of the funding model, the Parliament of Canada provides the secretariat for this conference.

Our ask for the fiscal year 2019-20 from the House of Commons is \$77,081—or 35% of the total budget—and \$426,971 for the year 2020-21, which is the year in which the conference would be implemented, so the total cost to the House of Commons would be \$504,052. The provinces and territories will also have to do a similar approval process.

This completes my presentation, and I am prepared to answer any questions you should have.

Thank you.

•(1125)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Shall we do both first, and then have questions? Is that the wish of members?

Okay.

Ms. Fry, go ahead.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Director, OSCE PA, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association):** Thank you very much.

Thank you for listening to my presentation. It's my pleasure to bring forward the concept that Canada should host, in 2020, the big summer conference of the OSCE PA, which is a large conference.

OSCE is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Parliamentary Assembly is a very large one, so that we are looking at something like 700 delegates coming from 56 nations.

I think it's important to note that the OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization under chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

We were asked, two years ago, by the OSCE PA to host the summer conference in 2020. There are three conferences hosted each year by the OSCE PA. One is in Vienna. It's called the winter meeting, and it's always very much like a business meeting. The second one is the summer conference, which is the one we're asking about. The third one is a fall conference that highlights issues dealing with Mediterranean problems and Middle East problems.

The event that we are asking to host will bring about 700 people, as I said, from 56 nation-states. Canada and the United States are the only two countries outside of Europe and Central Asia that are involved in the OSCE; in fact, a very long time ago—actually, 40 years ago—we were responsible for bringing about the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which was to deal with the Cold War at the time.

It is really important that Canada play a role. We were asked to do so because Canada is seen as having a huge role to play in terms of some of the big issues that are being dealt with now—cybersecurity; foreign interference by countries such as Russia, as we know; and when we look at Europe, intervention in elections, intervention in the business and security of nation-states. We are also looking at the fact that there is an extreme set of governments across Europe that no longer want to be involved in democracy and democratic institutions.

Canada has a huge role to play within that sphere. We now note that in the recent aggression by Russia against Ukraine—once again a big issue—Canada is seen as a major player in this forum. As well, the issue of freedom of the press and the issue of democratic institutions are at play here in this particular meeting.

The last time we hosted a fall meeting was about 30 years ago, so Canada is really supposed to come up and belly up to the bar now. The reason is that, of the 56 nation-states that make up the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, very many of them are not capable of hosting this kind of event. We are looking at countries that are recovering from conflict—Bosnia, and others. We're looking at Central Asian countries that just don't have the capacity or the resources to host it.

Many of the countries that have hosted it are now hosting it again for the third time, and we have really been lax in playing our role over the last 30 years. Germany has hosted it twice. We have seen Austria host it twice. We have seen France host it. We have seen Belarus, near the Russian Federation, host it. So we have seen quite a few countries doing this, and I think there is also this concept that we're not playing our part if we don't come up and do this.

The cost of this conference is detailed for you, I think, in the presentation you were given beforehand, but I would be very happy to answer any questions.

I think this is a current and timely conference for Canada to be hosting, in view of some of the security issues that we're facing globally.

Thank you.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Ms. Bergen, go ahead.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition):** First of all, thank you both, Ms. Fry and Ms. Ratansi, for being here and for your presentation.

I'm a member of both of those associations, and I think that conferences such as these are very important. I think it's also, as you articulated, really important that Canada play a role. Although I think we already do a lot of heavy lifting, we want to continue to play that role.

Unfortunately, and through no fault of your own, there is an underlying issue right now that has not been resolved, which means, for me—I don't know how other members of the board feel—that I don't feel I can proceed with approving these funds.

There was an issue that arose at our last BOIE meeting four weeks ago. JIC came to us to present their annual report. At that time, I or my colleague tried to raise an underlying issue whereby these very important associations that have been operating successfully here on Parliament Hill for many years had been turned into a political mechanism. We felt that we needed to address that here, at this BOIE, because we are asked to approve these funds. We were not allowed to discuss it. We were told it was out of order and, to my knowledge, those issues still have not been addressed and there's no resolution.

Unfortunately—and this is the taint that has now come to be borne on these really good associations—until we can find a resolution so that these associations are not allowed to be politicized and the rules broken.... I don't even know now where we can discuss it. If the ruling is that we can't discuss JIC at BOIE, perhaps there is another place to discuss that, but I have not been informed as to where that is.

My thoughts are that I want to see these initiatives go forward, but the underlying issue has to be addressed so that type of thing doesn't happen again.

Thank you.

• (1130)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Strahl, go ahead.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chief Opposition Whip):** Thank you.

Just to add briefly to my colleague's excellent summary, while I understand that JIC, the Joint Interparliamentary Council, does conduct their meetings in camera, we can take from the minutes of those meetings that the matters raised regarding governance have not yet been resolved. There is nothing to prevent the type of fiasco that happened as a result of the October 30 meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Association, which was directly related, unfortunately, and did cast a pall over the NATO annual assembly that was conducted in Halifax. I believe much of the dispute involved that.

Just to be clear, we understand that the majority of the members of the NATO Parliamentary Association wished to have a change in the chair; however, the way it was done broke every rule in the book, and there was no recourse for members of Parliament. It was simply tyranny of the majority. The Joint Interparliamentary Council would need to address that issue to prevent that from happening again, or provide for recourse and appeal mechanisms for members of Parliament that respect the fundamental rules of members of

Parliament—no matter what party they're in—having access to a pre-established set of rules and regulations. Meetings cannot simply be hijacked for political purposes.

It really was an unfortunate politicization of these non-partisan organizations that have done great work for Canada and for parliamentarians the world over. Until such time as JIC is able to come to a resolution on that issue, on the ability of members to have a satisfactory dispute resolution mechanism that is built into the rules and regulations of all of the associations, we cannot approve any funding for JIC or, indirectly, to these types of programming.

Again, this is no reflection on these organizations. This is no reflection on the excellent reports of their chairs. It is simply a matter that has unfortunately been allowed to fester and we need to come to a solution. Perhaps this will provide the impetus for JIC to do that work, to work with the deputy speaker, the Senate and all members of JIC to recognize that this is not something that has gone away just because a meeting happened.

This is a live issue for us, and one that we would hope will be resolved quickly so that we can get on with the job of these important associations to conduct their business in a way that respects the rights of members and respects the non-partisan nature of these organizations.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Holland, go ahead.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Chief Government Whip):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that there's obviously a significant amount of disagreement with the way the events were characterized. It was your ruling in the House as to where these matters should be adjudicated. First, it should be dealt with at the JIC. Then, if it was unable to be dealt with there, it would be brought here.

The reality is that there was a decision made by the NATO Parliamentary Association that they wished to change their chair. It was within their right to make that request. They may not like the fact that a majority of the members made a different decision with the chair. I think it's most unfortunate that this body, which is non-partisan, is having this issue brought into it. It's most unfortunate, we would suggest, that we should hold hostage important matters of diplomacy and work with international partners because a chair was lost.

We had had conversations. I thought that accommodation was found in Halifax. I thought that we had moved forward in this. I think that there are ways to adjudicate this matter that shouldn't interfere with the business of the Board of Internal Economy, which is not designed for, nor has the purpose of, airing grievances of a partisan nature. I think this is a most unfortunate direction—that we would, on a partisan issue, decide to hold hostage the agenda of this body.

• (1135)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Before I go back, I just want to clarify one thing. In the ruling, I think you'll find, if I recall correctly, that it indicated first that these matters should be dealt with at the associations themselves, if possible. If not there, then at the Joint Interparliamentary Council. If that didn't work, then it could be brought here. We could have the JIC come back and report to us.

After I go to Ms. Bergen, it may be possible to hear from Madame Labrecque-Riel about whether there's anything to report from the JIC in relation to this.

I will first go to Ms. Bergen.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Thank you all.

I have a couple of items. Mr. Holland's comments, I think, are proof as to why this has to be rectified. Because of the way we view what happened and the outcome and the ramifications, not only to individuals whose rights were trampled on by the tyranny of the majority that night, but also to the rights of future members who could be at risk of having that happen, I think it's clear this has to be resolved.

If it's not resolved here, then where? This BOIE has been made public so that issues like this could be discussed and rectified in a transparent and open way. This is where it should be discussed.

I would suggest that we probably should have discussed it four weeks ago, but the decision was taken and was respected that it was not in order for some reason. Clearly, it needs to be discussed, and it needs to be discussed openly. The reason is that we can then proceed in carrying out the good work that we're doing and have done in a non-partisan way.

My other point is that not only does it have to be rectified for the future, but someone has to be held accountable for the wrong that was done to individuals that night. It is clear to everyone. I believe it should be clear to everybody that it won't ever happen again.

Here's the truth. This time the majority happened to be the Liberals. Next time the majority could be the Conservatives, who could then exert tyranny over the minority. Whoever is the victim, it's not right, and it needs to be fixed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Just before I go on, just to be clear, this was raised in the House and therefore I made a ruling. The ruling indicated, as I said, that this should be dealt with first at associations themselves, if possible, and then, of course, at the JIC. If that didn't work, then at this, but we have not had a report from the JIC on this matter. I think it's appropriate that this be the process, and that was the ruling. I would expect members to accept that.

Now, having said that, there's no question we know how this body works: it works by consensus. If there are members who do not feel that they can approve expenditures, then those expenditures don't go forward. That's the nature of the body. There's no escaping that, so that's fine. I'm not sure how far you want to get into that at this point.

Can we go to Ms. Labrecque-Riel?

• (1140)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Obviously, we always respect the ruling of the Speaker. What would be the deadline for approval of these funds to allow for the planning and procedures to go ahead?

We have some time, and it will actually benefit the JIC and these associations to know that they do have a deadline to come up with a satisfactory resolution to the issues that were raised by the Speaker's ruling. Perhaps knowing that we can approve this funding for the next fiscal year at any time before that fiscal year would give appropriate deadlines to both the associations involved and the JIC,

so that they could comply with the Speaker's ruling and get this resolved in a way that would allow us to be comfortable to approve this spending.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Ms. Labrecque-Riel.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** I'd like to address that question first.

In terms of the timeline for both of these conferences, what was not necessarily mentioned was that the funding strategy was the same for the two conferences. The planning year, which is the next fiscal year, is not being funded through the main estimates process. It's being funded through what is anticipated as surplus funding from the associations' and exchanges' budgets.

The request for planning year funding in terms of the amounts of the expected costs is not necessarily an issue here. However, we cannot incur any costs toward a conference unless Parliament has given its approval that it wishes to host. The funding matter is a secondary question. The first question is, do we want to host? This would allow my team, for instance, to start engaging expenditures, whether it's main estimates funding or current funding.

The other issue is with regard to the international secretariat. If Canada does not come with a decision very soon as to whether or not it intends to host these conferences, both of these associations will be left scrambling to find another host country, and the timeline is quite significantly tight. The financial matters are not necessarily pressing, it is really the effect, internationally, of not having a decision in a timely fashion.

The funding request for the temporary funding of the main estimates process really doesn't kick in until the second fiscal year, but again, we cannot incur any expenditures, whether current funding or new funding, without the authorization to, first off, host this conference.

In terms of the questions with regard to the specific issue of the NATO General Assembly meeting on October 30 and what, if any, the JIC has moved on this issue, I can confirm that the JIC did have a meeting on November 7. That meeting, however, was held in camera, so I'm not able to reveal any of the discussions of that meeting. However, the conference did occur. As Mr. Holland alluded to, there was an arrangement for that conference in terms of the head and deputy head of the Canadian delegation. The last element would be that the executive committee of the NATO Parliamentary Association held a meeting earlier this week, so it has resumed its business.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We'll have Mr. Holland and then Ms. Chagger.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Just to be clear, I have first a question and then a comment, if I could, through you, Mr. Speaker.

When you say that the timing is pressed, that there's an urgency associated with this, how much time do we have? In other words, if this matter was deferred, when would the decision have to be made before it would seriously endanger both of these conferences?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** It's the 31st of December of this year, at least for OSCE.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** January 2019 would be fine for us.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** That gives us, obviously, a very limited window in order to make a decision. Otherwise, this would be scuttled. I would posit to you that there was a process you laid out to determine whether or not the parliamentary association meeting was conducted appropriately and whether or not the election of a new chair was conducted appropriately. Certainly, it's my position that it's the opposite of tyrannical for our association to be able to duly notify that it wants to establish a new chair and to have an election.

That having been said, I'm disappointed. I thought that we'd had discussions and come to an arrangement on this. The process that you laid out though is on a separate track. We've heard now that the matter has been heard. We don't know, because it was in camera, what the decision was of the JIC, but if there is a place to take it further my presumption to you, Mr. Speaker, is that you would then be in a position to determine whether or not it would be heard here. If there is some disagreement with that decision and that's the process that you laid out, I would be fully comfortable hearing that matter here. However, it seems to be very peremptory to hold hostage this process when we haven't even concluded the process that you had laid out.

The question I am putting to you on the concern that has been raised by my Conservative colleagues is that if they are in disagreement with the decision, which was presumably made in the in camera meeting, they would have an opportunity to raise that at our next board meeting, I would presume.

● (1145)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I mentioned earlier that the JIC could report to the board. There's a tentative meeting, or a meeting planned I gather, for next week, at which we could ask the JIC to report on this matter.

I also said that members are entitled to take their position on issues that come before the board as they wish.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** My suggestion on that basis, then, is that we ask for a report from JIC on this. If there is a desire to continue to till this earth, then I have no problem with the conversation being here, but it seems odd to me that we would, before the process that you spelled out, which they have been moving through, is played out, jump to the conclusion that somehow that process was incorrect when they haven't fully moved through the process that you had outlined. Then we are in the meantime going to jeopardize two conferences on this matter. That doesn't make any sense to me.

What I would suggest to my Conservative colleagues is that we deal with this. There's a process to deal with the other. I have no problem with it coming to get a report from JIC. Whatever that report is from JIC, we can have a conversation about the NATO matter, but I don't think that as that process plays out it should hold up our business here or that this should be held hostage.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Ms. Chagger.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** I have questions in regard to the presentations.

Is that suitable?

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think you can proceed with that.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** First of all, I want to say thank you as well for your presentations.

I am in support of Canada hosting these. I think we are playing a role on the international stage. I think to have so many countries then come to see our great country is an opportunity that I am supportive of. The question I have is in regard to looking at expenditures of the past versus now.

Thank you for outlining what the expenditures would be now. I know, Ms. Ratansi, you mentioned that there's a new model. I'm wondering if we know the expenses from the last time we hosted it in 1995, looking at inflation and so forth, but removing the expenditures of hosting.

Dr. Fry, I would ask the same. Is there a comparison as to what we are basing this off of? Is it based on the last conference hosted in another country, or is it based on what we are doing in this country?

I would reiterate that it sounds like there is a way forward so that we can ensure we are having that meaningful dialogue that's necessary. I think it's also important to note that JIC has met and there were some outcomes that came out of it and that NATO has also continued to proceed.

I also defer to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I would agree that there is a way forward, but it should not hold up the work that we need to do here.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** I will address the question of funding and comparative analysis. As you saw, the last time that Canada hosted either of these two conferences was some time ago. I do not have with me the actual expenditures for the 2004 conference, for example, of the CPA because it was a different type of conference.

The model, back then, as mentioned by Ms. Ratansi, called for the host to be responsible for paying accommodations, so the hotel costs and all the meals throughout the entire stay of all delegates. You can imagine how costly that would have been.

The new parameters being proposed for this conference remove that responsibility from the host country, whereby each delegate will be responsible for their own accommodations. There are only a few meals that are being imposed upon the host, if you like, as part of the hosting parameters.

● (1150)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** As someone who has also planned conferences in the past, perhaps not to this magnitude, there usually is a line-by-line item. There must be some record of expenditures, being able to remove the items that are no longer the responsibility of the host country. I'm just wondering if we have taken a look at them, taken into consideration where we are. I have no doubt you have tried to be efficient with the resources that you are requesting. I know that you do your due diligence. I have full confidence in the numbers. I would just like to know.

Then I would take it one step further and ask this: What is the delegate fee for countries that are coming, or is there one?

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** In the past model there has been no delegate fee. Just to remind you, Russ Hiebert and Joe Preston were both chairs, and in 2007, in Malaysia, we were going to walk away from Commonwealth, but then we persevered and we have worked hard to ensure the governance changes took place. With this governance model, we are not going to charge them any delegate fee; however, at the Bangladesh conference that we had, the spouses were to pay about \$1,300 U.S., and the observer status was \$3,000 U.S. We will have to come up with a balance. We have to discuss with our international headquarters as well as to how to manage it.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Ms. Labrecque-Riel, would you be able to provide this information? You don't need to do so today, but maybe next week.

Can you send us the information and details requested by Ms. Chagger?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Yes, of course.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you.

[English]

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I just wanted to respond, because the OSCE PA works on a very different model from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The host country is responsible for accommodation and meals, and of course any entertainment in the summer meeting, such as cultural attractions or whatever. It's a chance in a country like Canada to showcase our diversity as a nation with all our diverse cultural things. It would be very interesting to see Ukrainian dancers at this, and let them know that we can do this in Canada and that we have this kind of diversity.

However, given that the last time we hosted this conference was 30 years ago, I think it's pretty difficult to compare. The rules have not changed, and when you look at what goes on, for instance in Berlin last year, some countries undertake to do more than they're required to do. For instance, Berlin turned over the whole Bundestag to the meeting. The cost of the Bundestag and all the people, the clerks and everybody who worked there, was absorbed by the country because they wanted to showcase their beautiful Parliament.

You can do what you want, but the baseline is accommodation and meals and entertainment, if possible. It is within those kinds of parameters. As I said, if they wish to, countries can do whatever they choose, but we have tried to stick within the parameters and the baseline of what is possible, understanding we maybe don't want to spend as much money as Germany feels it can spend. We will follow the baseline requirements. We intend to have a lot of say in some of the issues that are going to be discussed at that meeting. We have that opportunity to do so.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I'd like to thank both presenters for giving us the deadlines we can work toward to get these matters addressed prior to approving these conferences, which we do want to do. We just simply believe that we need to deal with some governance issues. In spite of some of the previous comments, if I can perhaps provide.... I don't want to get into the whole thing. I've made a lengthy presentation in the House. Our views on this are known. This is not about one chairperson being removed. Conservatives are

good at math. We understand the majority is held by the Liberals and that if they wanted to change the chair, there is a proper way to do that within the rules.

That those rules were breached is the issue we're talking about. When members feel the rules are breached, what is their recourse? The Speaker has laid out a path forward. I would suggest that the path be accelerated to meet these deadlines so that we can get back to the good work that the Joint Interparliamentary Council and their member associations do.

That is where we are. We have a meeting next week to discuss business. In the past we've done a walk-around when we have signed off on expenditures. We would be happy to participate in that as well should more time be needed to resolve the matters we've identified here today.

● (1155)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you.

Do we have consensus that we would ask the JIC to report on this next week?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** For now, we'll thank the witnesses, our guests today.

[Translation]

Thank you for coming to meet with us.

[English]

We're going to go on to the fourth item on our agenda, which is services to members.

[Translation]

We're joined by Pierre Parent, the Chief Human Resources Officer, and Stéphan Aubé, the Chief Information Officer.

Mr. Parent, when you're ready, you may have the floor.

**Mr. Pierre Parent (Chief Human Resources Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I'm here today in my capacity as Chief Human Resources Officer of the House of Commons along with Robyn Daigle, who would be leading this new team if this proposal is approved by the Board, to propose the establishment of an HR advisory service and programs to members of Parliament to assist them in fulfilling their roles as employers.

As you are aware, members have a unique role as employers of their staff in their constituency and Hill offices. That being said, HR services provided to members by House administration are currently limited, and the existing service delivery model does not support the needs and requirements that are being expressed by members right now.

[Translation]

Members of Parliament are increasingly seeking advice, guidance and resources to help them address human resources issues.



As is the case for all employers, members of Parliament are under increasing pressure to create a positive workplace that reflects the changing social norms.

Access to human resources programs and advisory services will help them effectively fulfill their role as employers and contribute to a positive workplace.

I'll now leave the floor to Ms. Daigle.

[English]

**Ms. Robyn Daigle (Director, Members HR Services, House of Commons):** We are proposing the establishment of new HR services to members, including a team of dedicated senior HR consultants, who will be responsible for building a partner relationship and addressing the HR needs of members. HR advisory services offered would range through recruitment tools and support, assistance in managing sick leave accommodation in mental health situations, enhanced orientation services to support members and their staff, employee relations advice, and navigating conflict and harassment situations. The launch of the team of senior HR consultants would occur at the end of January 2019, if this proposal is accepted. This team would be available to work with the members and implement relevant tools and programs. A review and changes to the existing on-boarding practices is also under way in preparation for dissolution and post-election activities.

Over the past year, we've both been directly involved in assisting members with various files, and we can attest that these types of services are long overdue. For members to effectively carry out their role as employers, and ultimately their role as parliamentarians, they must have access to the same type of HR support as other employers, with advice and guidance based on sound HR management principles. By making adequate tools and programs available, we will place members in a better position to navigate difficult situations and address issues as they arise.

We are happy to take any questions at this time.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** To put this in context before I go to Mr. Holland, it's long struck me that one of the most important things we do as members of Parliament is hiring our staff. They are the first point of contact for our constituents. They provide a lot of services to our constituents because we're here a lot as parliamentarians. All the aspects of human resources are areas in which most MPs, when they start, haven't any training. I had the good fortune of having a sister who worked in HR. I learned a lot from her. I even got some good materials. Did that make me better at doing interviews and hiring? Hopefully, it did. I think over time I've improved in that regard, but I'm sure there are things we could all learn and do better in terms of managing these issues generally.

I want to put forward that context that I think there's some value in this, but I'm looking forward to hearing from colleagues about it.

Go ahead, Mr. Holland.

• (1200)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you very much.

I want to first of all, through you, commend the work that's been done. I think it's vitally important. These are changes that are badly needed.

Stepping back for a moment, it's going to take me a minute to get to a question, if that's okay. I would outline—as I have in conversations that we've had offline outside of this place—what I think the ideal circumstance is, what I'd like to see us move towards, and perhaps you could articulate how far this gets us to that.

My second job, after building fences, was as a summer student for a member of Parliament, so I've had some experience with this over the years.

I think for any organization.... For example, when I was executive director of Heart and Stroke, we would have a centralized job bank. People could look at what employment opportunities were available. We would hold on to resumes, so that if somebody didn't work out for one position, we would hold on to it for maybe another. We would ensure that all positions had job descriptions. If we were creating a new position, the first thing we would do is create a job description, understand its reporting relationships and its requirements, and put it out. You would then have a screening process that HR was involved in, to basically look at whether or not the candidate who was applying for the job—and through an interview and initial screening process—had the qualifications for that job.

These are things that are not available and that I think would be essential as a resource for members to utilize.

We don't have a performance management system. The reality is that at the beginning of the year, there's no goal-setting process. Because you don't have a goal-setting process, then you have no process of evaluation, which means that any of your compensation is not rooted in any sort of evaluation of performance. That is not present.

There is HR support, in the sense that if somebody has a problem, they can call your office. However, there isn't anything that someone in a workforce beyond this place would recognize. You would have an HR adviser you establish trust with, that you have communication with. When you have issues, you would then discover that through conversation.

One of the things we found when we talked to our own employees—there's Women on the Hill and others who've done this work—is that they don't know where to go. They're very reticent to go up to the chief human resource officer or to the whip, or to the chief of staff of the whip. It seems like a very nuclear option to them. Therefore, they're not reporting. As a result, very minor issues become larger and larger before they become something much more significant.

One of the things that concerns me in this—I know I've already relayed it in conversations prior to this meeting—is that if we have eight HR consultants against 2,000 political employees, that makes it pretty hard to do proactive work or trust building. Those eight people might be able to have one half-hour conversation with that entire group of 2,000, but they certainly aren't going to be having the kind of in-depth conversations to build trust, so that on a month-to-month basis, maybe even week-to-week basis, as they're encountering challenges inside of an office, they could have a conversation.

I see that as being two-dimensional. In other words, there is both the need on the part of the member to be able to get support in how to manage their staff or get associated training, but there is, separate and apart from that, the need for staff to be able to have somewhere to go to ask how they manage a situation, either with another staff person or in fact with their employer, if it is indeed the member.

I would see where we could encounter problems. They need to be able to have environmental assessments or to take a 360° view of what is happening within the office environment. They would then be able to come back to us, as a whip, to say that there needs to be training, or there clearly was a lack of understanding of how to deal with this particular management issue. There's the need to be able to understand the source and root of the problems when we have issues that come forward to us.

Obviously, I'm speaking in fast-forward and generalized terms. Really what I'm talking about is professionalizing our HR services so that they would mirror and be reflective of what we see elsewhere in the world. I recognize that this place is special and it is different, but I think that having these kinds of services is essential. I think that in the wake of Bill C-65 and of expectations that people have in terms of what happens here, these things are quite essential.

There's where we are. There's what is in front of us today, and I've articulated—at least from my perspective—the ideal paradigm. How far does this get to that?

•(1205)

Maybe specifically speak to this concern I have that eight people against 2,000 are not.... I mean, basically, they would have to be sitting by the phone waiting in a reactionary way for people to call them. There would be no element of proactivity in that. What would it take to be able to proactively have an opportunity to be reaching out, building that trust and establishing those relationships?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** Thank you for your question.

The proposal we have before you is one that would allow us to start to learn how to serve members, because we're opening a line of business that doesn't exist right now. I'm absolutely 100% sure that if you look at this thing a year or 18 months or two years from now, it will be slightly different. If you like what you see if we create this team, we'll come back and we'll ask for maybe more resources, but right now the evaluation we've made is in accordance with what we know from three of the recognized political parties that there will be somewhat of a usage.

With regard to your question regarding the proactivity part, there is currently a service that is called "Finding Solutions Together". It was extended to members and their staff in 2014 when we had the policy on preventing and addressing harassment approved by the

board. The board made a decision back then to extend that service to members and members' staff. It does exist. It is used by some of your staff. In this proposal, we do have at least one direct resource and two indirect that would be added to this team in order to be proactive.

I think that right now it's more about getting that service known. We got the same message, which is that sometimes your staff don't know where to go, so we do acknowledge that there is a need for us to better promote our services. But they do exist, and if the intent is to have this service grow, we'll come back with a proposal in the future.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** There are a couple of points on that.

One is that if we're approving where we are today, and there's an acknowledgement that we're on a journey, then seeing that road map would be helpful so that we can see where we are in that and where we are potentially going. I don't know how other members on the board feel, but if we're approving something today and it's not the final iteration, seeing the map of where it's going and having an understanding of what the associated costs are.... If we're opening up a new line of business, I understand that some element of that might not be clear, but I think I would like to see a generalized road map so we can understand the road that we're beginning to walk, because this is clearly the first step in a journey, not an end destination. I would want to have a better understanding of that.

On the second point that I would make, maybe I'm not making it clear when I'm talking about an HR consultant. Not to keep harkening back to my time at Heart and Stroke, but one of the things we did is that there was an expectation that every employee have a regular status update with somebody from the HR team. That happened on a proactive basis whether or not there was an issue that was occurring. That would take place—I don't know—every three weeks or something thereabouts. That's the level of proactivity that I'm talking about having available.

The reason is that if somebody.... Let's take an example of sexual harassment, verbal harassment or physical harassment. Somebody can feel intimidated. Somebody may not feel empowered to come forward. They may not feel empowered with the existing structure in terms of jumping to somebody who they don't know. The reason why these things exist—I'm using that as an extreme example—is that you establish trust with somebody so that you can understand the process, how you're protected and how you can come forward.

The second element is that there is a much more tactical element, particularly in light of the issues we talked about. I think the Speaker was quite right. Many people come here without management experience, where they do need help, where there are issues happening on a day-to-day basis and where they're not sure how to navigate them. My goodness, it happens with people who are very experienced managers where they require the resources of human resources.

Effectively what we have right now, as I understand it, is a sort of reactionary force, such that when we have problems, people are going to pick up the phone, rather than a proactive force that exists on an ongoing basis and is establishing trust so that on a regular basis those conversations are taking place, and so that when you're dealing with a small issue of management—how to talk to an employee about an issue that you're having, how to deal with your manager or how to deal with mismatched expectations—there's that opportunity to deal with it.

My reflection today is that if everybody used the services as they're used outside of this place, we would collapse in about four seconds, because there is just no way that we could operate that way. What we do instead is that we operate without those supports, and I would posit that it is a dangerous proposition. That's not a healthy proposition. That is a major concern for me.

I recognize that we're not going to change that overnight, but it brings me back to the broader question of a road map. I think that if we are going to approve something, then I would like to see where we are on that journey and how we're going to address these issues on a broader basis.

• (1210)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Parent, I just want to suggest to you that I don't think there is a road map at this point.

Maybe I'm misunderstanding, but it strikes me that what is being offered here are things that members can have access to. It may be that we want to offer members training in relation to their management in terms of human resources. I think that's very valuable so that they know when they want to call upon this kind of assistance.

I don't know if you're talking about going beyond that to a point whereby maybe we're not imposing, but we're.... I don't know if you mean that we would require members to do certain things. That becomes more problematic because members have their individual responsibilities and their rights as members to manage things as they see fit, provided that they don't do something wrong in relation to the kinds of things that you talked about: harassment and so forth.

Mr. Parent may wish to answer other than that. I'm going to go to Pierre, and then I'm anxious to go on, because I have Mr. Strahl, Ms. Bergen and Madame Brosseau.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think one thing that I'd like to mention is that this service that we're creating would be fairly different from the service that we currently have for the House administration.

For the House administration, we serve a corporate role in the sense that, yes, we are advising managers, but we're also advising employees to a certain extent. If we offered this service to members, members remain the employers for their own employees, so it would be more of an advisory/consulting service with regard to this aspect because it would be difficult, unless we're invited by the member, the employer, to do an intervention. We've done some interventions in some members' offices, and we've done it with the invitation of the member or with the whip's intervention.

This is, I think, the most fundamental difference. We want to respect the fact that each member is his or her own employer. We don't want to insert ourselves in a member's business and in managing a member's own employees unless that member decides to invite us.

It will be a journey of discovery. It is difficult for me to develop a definite road map. For instance, with regard to recruitment, we went with the assumption that members don't require any recruitment assistance. We started to assist members who had made these requests to us, and then we were surprised with the amount of requests that we were receiving.

Basically, this is a journey of discovery for us. Yes, we plan to adjust to each member and to adjust to the changing nature of their business. It is difficult for us right now because we only have a small sample of HR cases. We've dealt with some, but not necessarily with the magnitude of 338 members. There were several cases that we weren't involved in.

I don't know, Robyn, if you have anything to add.

**Ms. Robyn Daigle:** I might just add that you've mentioned a couple of things in terms of the road map.

I think it's important that we make sure that we start with the building blocks. I think some of the things that you've mentioned in terms of tools, like general job descriptions and performance management tools, are things that don't currently exist. I think that they will certainly help the employers, the members, to better establish requirements in the workplace.

The other thing is that our proposal.... The senior HR consultants are there for the member, but they can certainly facilitate situations that are ongoing with employees. The other thing is that some of the roles that we're looking at are programs that already exist that are interfacing with member staff, things like the respectful workplace program, the harassment prevention program and a nurse counsellor who can meet with employees, as well, to deal with different situations.

We recognize that there may be, longer term, an evolution of the service delivery model. We, in fact, expect it, but as Pierre mentioned, the piece that's missing for us is the data behind it.

The other thing is that we don't know how much uptake will come. We expect that we might have some members who frequently use us and others who may decide not to. We can't impose our services on them. I think that part of it will be through reputation and building those relationships.

We also recognize that every time there's a shift in government and representation, we have to establish new relationships. Some of the things that you've mentioned are some of the building blocks that we need to put in place. I think that once some of those things are in place, they will help us to evolve the service delivery model.

The other thing is that with Bill C-65, there will be some obligations that will be placed on members' offices in terms of harassment prevention and also in terms of health and safety. We don't know what that will look like yet, but that will also be another opportunity for us to shift and take a look again at whether we need to look at something different.

•(1215)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have several concerns here.

I would argue that this is well beyond first steps. We're being presented with a solution to an issue on which our members might have been reaching out to CHRO, I don't know. We have not solicited feedback from our members on what services they feel the CHRO could be providing to them that they are not currently. This, to me, seems like a bit of the cart-before-the-horse proposal. I'll say that at the outset.

Mr. Parent said that desires are being expressed by members. That might be true. That does not necessarily mean that those desires should be met by CHRO or that we should approve an entirely new apparatus to deal with that.

The feeling I get when I hear this presentation and when I read the details is that this is being treated like a government department, the department of the House of Commons, where members of Parliament are in an org chart, and there is an HR management system that is imposed to....it says to provide services, but when you get into recruitment support and this organization is going to be sourcing, screening and helping with interviews—and perhaps a bank of resumés will be kept on file—who makes the determination as to which resumés are forwarded to a member, for instance?

We're talking about performance management tools or that there is no goal-setting process. Members of Parliament are not under a global “we're all employees of the House of Commons”. We have a unique role. We have a unique perspective on human resources, and I think every member.... In my office, we certainly have a goal-setting process. In my office, we certainly have a performance review operation.

These things tend to creep when they are offered originally as an option, and then it becomes part of the letter of offer. Was the interview conducted with the CHRO present? Did the resumé come through the CHRO? These are things that I see.

The members in my caucus will view this very differently, perhaps, than members in other caucuses. I have deep concerns, quite frankly, about this. It appears to be something that will be imposed on members.

Usually when things come to this board, it's a result of members coming to us and saying, “I see a need here. We have a problem here where our needs are not being met.” I would suggest that what should be done here is to inform members of their obligations, and there are new obligations coming. There should perhaps be briefing sessions, templates offered to members to say, “Here is how your operation must change as a result of Bill C-65. Here are your obligations to ensure a safe workplace under this new legislation.”

I really do feel this is something that I have not heard. I will be honest: I have not had a single member come to me in the year and a half that I've been the whip, and we deal with situations all the time. No one has said, “I don't feel that the CHRO is serving me well. I need more services from that office and I want to subcontract”—if I

can put it that way—“my obligations and my rights as an employer to another organization.”

I would like to see, certainly, a much more detailed analysis of how.... We're talking about \$2.83 million, \$2.49 million, but then add on the employee benefits. If this is a building block, it's a significant one, and from those comments this will only continue to grow. Before this gets approved, I would like to see an analysis of.... Members should be consulted if this is what they're after. While certain members may have been expressing their desires to CHRO directly by asking for services, other members have not been asked what they would like to see. Maybe they just do it all internally. Maybe they do their own coaching or their own training.

•(1220)

Before we approve this, I think members should be consulted. Members should be asked about what they think CHRO should approve. Don't simply rely on those who contacted CHRO. Perhaps there could be an actual request: What services would help you in your unique role as a member of Parliament? Again, I know it was said that it will be respected, but once this starts to happen, I think members will slowly lose their autonomy as this organization takes on more of those roles that have traditionally fallen to the member of Parliament. We have to be very careful to maintain that this is an advisory service and that it's what members are actually looking for. Personally, I don't think this proposal provides either one of those solutions.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you.

I think the intent, by the way, really is that it be an advisory service, but I think your point about it is very important. It should not be something that's imposed. We took steps in some cases where we saw big concerns or incidents that we felt we had to deal with, of course, but about things like harassment, as I said earlier. That's a different kind of thing. I think you're absolutely right that we shouldn't be imposing a manner of managing people's offices. The question, I think, should be about what services can be on offer.

I'd like to let Mr. Parent answer.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** I agree; I think this service will be optional for members. That's the intent.

As I said earlier, this would not be typical corporate HR. This would be more of an advisory to members who need it. The tools we develop that would be offered to individual members would be optional. They could be modified by members if members wanted to. They could be used or not used by members.

That's the orientation we would like to take.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Ms. Bergen is next.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Thank you very much.

Thank you for your presentation. Building on what Mr. Strahl talked about, when I saw the heading “New Human Resources Services for Members as Employers”, my initial thought was to wonder if our whips were consulted on what our members are expressing. Are there challenges when it comes to how they manage their employees? It sounds like that hasn't been done. That might be a good place to start. It looks like \$2.5 million a year will be spent on helping our members be better employers. I think we should go back and find out what their unique challenges are and what services they're looking for.

Mr. Holland's description was very, very different from my own personal experience and from where I think I have challenges. I'm from a rural riding. My biggest challenge is with my employees who aren't here in Ottawa. Having somebody here in Ottawa that they're going to phone...? They can barely get IT dealt with. There are other challenges there may not be an easy fix for. That's one example.

Another example is the whole idea around setting goals. There may be some appetite for members of Parliament to have a template developed. For example, how do you sit down and do goal-setting with your employees? That's a template. It's like when we have to give letters to our employees; we go to legal services and they say, “Here's the template.”

There's another great parallel example in the ten percenter services. We can use House of Commons services to develop our ten percenters or we can use entirely our own imagination and what we know is good for our own riding. That's where I could see this possibly going, but it would need to start with us knowing that this now is a new thing. Probably before that's even established, let our members know what the new requirements will be under the new legislation. From that, they can have discussions with our whips as to what they believe they will need. Out of that, this could then be developed, whereby needs are actually being addressed.

It may end up being something like our resource services—for us it's the CRG, for example—where it doesn't come out of House administration. It's just a budget amount that's given to each of the parties. Those parties work with their members in order to address that. I'm not suggesting that would be the solution, but what I'm seeing is that if this is meant to be services for members as employers, we have definitely put the cart before the horse. I'm afraid that the goals will not be met at all, which I don't believe would be satisfactory to anybody.

I think we need to go back to the drawing board, find out what the challenges are that our members are having in terms of their employees, and then be able to address them through our whips.

●(1225)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madame Brousseau, go ahead.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (House Leader of the New Democratic Party):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank Monsieur Parent and Madame Daigle for the presentation.

At first blush when looking at this, it made me think back to when I came into office in 2011. It was a whirlwind getting to the Hill, walking up, being in the House of Commons for the first time and then all the training. As soon as you're elected, you want to learn

what your job in Ottawa is and get set up as fast as possible back in your constituency. I can't remember anything that happened orientation-wise, because I was just trying to get as much done as possible.

It's important to make sure that we evaluate the needs of members and make sure that if we do go ahead with new HR services and programs, they address the needs of members of Parliament. When I found out that there was this recruitment system being proposed and that recruitment services have been offered to certain MPs, I just wondered if that kind of blurs the line between House administration and MPs' duties and responsibilities.

I was wondering if there are any risks that could arise in a situation in which the House administration does recruitment, interviews and background checks. If something were missed, could that cause a problem? What kind of recourse would there be for MPs who use this recruitment system? For us, it's a little bit different. We have a collective agreement; we're unionized.

This is a good idea, but I think what we really need to do is talk to MPs and maybe go back to whips to see what other kinds of services would be needed.

I'm happy that we're talking about health and safety, but I think we also need to make sure that we have enough information about mental health for our offices and make sure that MPs know what kind of supports are available for staff.

This is really interesting. I'm for this, but I'm just worried. I think we need a little bit more information. As was mentioned, once the recruitment services were offered to one member, it snowballed, and other MPs found out about it.

I'd never heard of this being offered until we had a briefing about it. Given the fact that we're only going to have eight senior consultants and then 10 program and services representatives in the HR department, I'm just wondering if that's going to be enough, because it seems they are going to have a lot of work to do.

Those are my concerns around this.

●(1230)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Could I ask you to go back to the previous slide for just a second? I think it might be helpful. In the fourth bullet, there are a number of things listed. The first one, of course, relates to the recruitment issues, but the others are about managing sick leave and mental health situations, accommodating employees with special needs, health and safety, and navigating conflict and harassment complaints.

I wonder to what degree the concerns that members have are with the first of those as opposed to the others. Is it with all of them? Let me just be very clear that, from my perspective, the independence of members is extremely important. Their right to manage their offices is something I consider to be vitally important, and I appreciate what the members have said about this.

I have Mr. Holland and then Mr. Strahl.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion. It occurs to me, in listening to the conversation, that there's work to do. We need to go back and have some conversations about the different ways, the different needs that we have or don't have, as the case may be, and how those can be made manifest. I don't think, as an example, that any of this that I'm suggesting should be mandatory. I'm suggesting that I would certainly go to members of our caucus and make a strong suggestion that it would be wise to use some of these things. If our members made a suggestion that they didn't want to, that would absolutely be their choice.

If I take screening as an example, I also don't have a problem. Ms. Bergen said that perhaps it should reside on the political side of the House, so that we're doing our own screening or we're given the ability to do the screening there. I wouldn't have a problem with that, as an example. I do think having that service is incredibly essential. There are a lot of members who come to me regularly, saying they don't know how to evaluate the skills. They want to hire somebody, and they need them to be able to do certain things, but they don't know how to evaluate that. If you're elected and you are a professional—let's say you were a doctor—maybe you've never managed somebody. You certainly may not have managed someone in this context. Having somebody who can help you with that screening, I think, is incredibly important.

A performance management system usually is rooted in evidence and in practice. Yes, we can invent our own performance management systems. Of course, we're welcome to do that. I would encourage our members to use something that has been tried and tested and has some kind of universality to it. The expectation would be very much on our side of the fence. We wouldn't share the performance evaluation with the CHRO. It would be for the utilization of the members.

Anyway, all of this is to say that I think, personally, that these changes are essential. For us to operate as a modern workforce, these are things that we need, and need urgently, I would say. I can see that there are a lot of conversations that need to take place. Rather than having a big debate here, I would suggest that maybe we just table this and get the opportunity to have some conversations, first among ourselves—so that we can understand what our needs are, where each of us is coming from on this, and how it could be bound to manage some of the concerns that have been expressed—and then we can have a conversation with some folks about the path forward from there.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Good.

Mr. Strahl, go ahead.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Yes, I would agree. I would also ask for some direction from CHRO, to provide us with the questions that they perhaps asked themselves when they were creating this program, to ask what services members are looking for.

I'm sure there are metrics about what you are asked for. As people come to you, here's what they're asking for. There are a number of members who, I would submit, have never contacted CHRO but have identified gaps, perhaps, that they would like to see assistance with.

I would agree with Mr. Holland that we should come back to this, that we should be given an opportunity to take it to our members. What will provoke some concern is that this is not simply a request in the supplementary estimates like, "The CHRO is overwhelmed with requests, and we need more money to hire more people." This is "We are setting up something new, and here's what it can deliver." That, I think, is where members will want to have some input into what is being proposed. If this is a matter of just needing more money for more people to carry out the tasks we already ask of the CHRO, perhaps people would be more comfortable with it. It seems to me that it is a new service delivery model—it says that right on it. It requires new management and administrative staff. This is a new function. We need buy-in from members, and members should be the ones crafting it.

I think we can do that. Maybe we'll end up with the exact same program, but I don't think we should start with that assumption. I would agree with Mr. Holland that we should.... I don't know if we want to set a deadline for the new fiscal year or if this is something we would be looking for.

Certainly, we would be uncomfortable proceeding with the plan that's been laid out for us at this time.

● (1235)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think it's been a very helpful conversation, regardless.

Mr. Parent, do you have anything to tell us about where this sprung from?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** We've been involved in several cases, whether assisting members in having difficult conversations with regard to termination, or health and safety. Probably the most challenging case with regard to health and safety was managing a member's office. We assisted a member in managing a very difficult medical case. We interfaced with nurses, doctors and health professionals. This is a good example of where there was a need and we had the resources internally. We offered these resources to this member, who was in dire need of this service.

It's the same issue with regard to recruiting. A member was looking for resumés for a downtown Toronto office, so we went on LinkedIn and obtained some resumés. We didn't make a decision on behalf of the member. We just assisted the member in dealing with a very pressing HR issue.

These are examples of where this came from. These members talked to their colleagues and said that if they were going through something difficult, they might want to talk to me or Robyn.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Are you overwhelmed at this point?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** It's useful to know that, but I think it's also useful for members of the board to discuss this with their members. On the one hand, they can make them aware that these are services that not all members may know are available, but on the other hand, if they're already overwhelmed, that's a challenge. The main thing is to have that conversation. I think that's vital.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

We'll now discuss the management of computers, among other things, in the constituency offices.

Stéphan Aubé, the Chief Information Officer, will speak to us.

Welcome, Mr. Aubé.

[English]

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, members of the board, this presentation today is a follow-up to the presentation we did in the spring.

In the spring, we proposed to the Board to launch a pilot with 60 to 70 members' offices to strengthen the IT security posture in the constituency offices and also to ensure parity between what's offered as a service between the Hill and the constituency offices. We also wanted to standardize the service delivery in the constituency offices and provide more simplicity in purchasing equipment for the members and their constituency offices.

We're back here today after the pilot, during which more than 70% of the offices were set up. We've received great feedback. The outcome of the pilot is that we're seeking support from the board to offer a managed set of computers for the constituency offices. We're proposing that every constituency office have centrally funded computers.

● (1240)

[Translation]

It can be up to a maximum of five computers.

[English]

We're also proposing that constituency offices could buy an additional five computers through their MOBs, if required by the members. We're also proposing that any computers purchased for the constituency offices leverage a supply chain that will be set up from the House for security reasons.

In addition to that, based on the feedback we received during the pilot, members are also requesting that we provide compatible printing solutions in the constituency offices.

We're also proposing that the existing model of funding for the network connectivity between the constituency offices and the Hill be reviewed to be centrally funded, versus the MOB.

This is the proposal we're making here, sir. As I outlined, it's very important for us that we move forward, as we're making this recommendation for security reasons. Security in our constituency offices is the highest vector of attack when it comes to security at the Hill. We want to leverage this initiative, and also improve the services to members, by putting forward this proposal.

I am open to questions, sir.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Strahl, go ahead.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you.

As the person who chose the Conservative members who would receive this pilot, I'm happy to report that I made the list, and that we

do have the computers. They were installed fairly recently, so I think the initial report has been good. To have that integrated system where you can access shared drives and all the rest of it has been very useful.

My question.... I wasn't sure if this was a feature of the pilot or if it would be a feature going forward. It says to provide each member with up to five managed computing devices. I have two full-time employees in my office, and me. I'm there a limited amount of time, but when I am, I do use a computer. We were told that this would be the limit. Three computers would be provided, because that's the number of employees I had on file. Now, we also have volunteers, a server and those sorts of things.

That's my first question. How will you determine the "up to five"? Is that a determination made by the member or by administration?

Second, I was pleased to hear that you wanted to make sure the printers work with these things; that's critical. However, the bizhub printers, the all-in-one units that we all have here and that many of us have in our constituency offices, are priced—or were at the time, anyway—between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per unit, I think.

Are you suggesting, then, that this would become part of the standard offer that would go to the House administration budget, or are you just saying that you will make sure the printers we've purchased through our MOB are working with the new computers before the installers pack up and go?

Those are my two questions.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Thank you, sir.

In the past, there used to be a limit on the number of employees. This would limit the number of computers they could purchase. This proposal will be determined by the member, so the member will actually be able to receive up to five computers from the central fund.

The average throughout the pilot has been around 4.2. Depending on different members, we've seen on average around 4.2 computers per area. That's for the first question.

For the printing issues, we're not proposing a particular solution. We're proposing to work with your office to understand the needs and then to propose a solution that could come forward. If someone wants the photocopier-type printing that we have here on the Hill, from a party perspective, we could offer that. If they also want a lower-end solution from our vendors, leveraging our supply chain, we'll be able to provide that and customize that by working with your office specifically.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** When you say you offer that, does that mean that will come out of the central budget?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Yes.

**Mr. Daniel G. Paquette (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons):** I guess what will come out of the central budget is the actual acquisition of the asset—

● (1245)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Right.

**Mr. Daniel G. Paquette:** —and not the actual usage of it. You'll see that because of our own supply chain and the volume we buy for the Hill, our costs are significantly less than the \$5,000 or \$10,000 for those machines.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Is that not currently a requirement when you're purchasing that kind of IT equipment? Would that be something we would require members to do then, to use that? We used to have the constituency improvement fund, which required you to purchase through a certain track.

I guess what I'm asking... Our members will be interested to know out of which envelope this will come. If they choose to go to a local supplier, does that then come out of their MOBs? If it's not purchased through you, does it then come out of their MOBs, and if they purchased it themselves, is that allowed and will you still service it?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** For computers, we're proposing that all computers be purchased through the House. It would take away the opportunity for buying through local suppliers. For security reasons, we want to ensure that we have the same image on these computers as the ones on the Hill.

For printing solutions, we're also proposing that we leverage the vehicles we have at the House. We will offer a variety, but they will be specific brands that we have certified and integrated into the computing solutions.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Holland, go ahead.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** On that point, just so I understand it, in the existing inventory of computers, some are networked in and some aren't. For example, in my constituency, often the person who's doing the graphic design and whatnot isn't integrated in, so they'll use a laptop that isn't integrated into the network at all.

Does that mean that everything that was purchased would have to be linked into the House of Commons network and be interfacing with it? Would you be unable to have anything that's outside of that network? What would you do with the existing inventory of computers, some of which are networked into the House of Commons and some of which aren't?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Let me answer your second question first, because that will help answer your first question, sir.

Anything that would be required to be connected to the infrastructure we would want to be a House machine, because of the standards.

Recognizing that some constituency offices have computers that have been bought in the last few years, we're not planning to replace them until they reach the end of their life cycle, so we would be working with each of the offices to determine the appropriate scenario. When moving forward, when we do the life cycle of this equipment, we would then move to leveraging the ones that we have.

Now, recognizing that, there will always be the option for the computers that are bought, leveraging our standing offers, to have them or not have them on the network if there are specialized tools that would require that, sir.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Again, I am not using it and I am trying to project this across all of our caucus, so I am just taking my issue to understand it more broadly, because if I have the issue, no doubt others will.

It could be quite restrictive to get a program loaded onto the computer, because we don't have control over our own computers. We have to effectively get permission from your department in order to be able to download a program. If somebody wants to be able to put a program on in the future—if they're in graphic design or whatnot, or maybe they were using a platform that hasn't been approved—everything will have to effectively reside with and be controlled by you. Nobody will be able to evade that.

If that's the case, how will we deal with that? When I was first an MP—and this is going back a long way—I wasn't allowed to put spell-check on my BlackBerry, because it wasn't an approved application. How are we going to avoid the circumstance of members wanting to be able to use software or innovations, but potentially facing a long lag time before their installation on their own computers is approved?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Mr. Speaker, we're not planning to do that. If someone came with a device that was required, it would be managed on an exception-by-exception basis. We will allow it. For example, we do allow, in certain cases, Macintosh devices or Apple devices for particular graphic solutions that cannot be performed in the environment that we have, and we do accept these solutions; we just don't attach them to our network. This will be allowed moving forward.

For the software aspect, for example, if you're looking for a piece of software that we do not want on our infrastructure, what we are proposing as a first step is to work with you to see if you can run that on our PCs—maybe not on our network, but we can have it on a stand-alone in your office, because we can still manage it through the Internet.

Then if that doesn't work, we'll find another exception and work with you to make that happen.

This is why we're proposing a series of machines that are funded centrally and a series of machines that are funded through the MOB, the members' office budget, sir. We're just trying to standardize the machines so that we don't end up with a large variety of assets that we can't really recycle after an election.

● (1250)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** The only asterisk I would place beside my support for this is that caveat. I just don't want to see us finding that installing software or something that is required for a member's business involves a huge process for installation or that somebody is being told, "Sorry, we're not allowing that because we have decided we don't approve that software." That's what I am saying.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Mr. Speaker, I can attest that all we're asking is that the machine that would be running that software is not attached to the network, but you can use it—

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Okay, fair enough.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** We give you an image that you can work with. All we want to do is standardize the machines there, sir.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Fair enough. Thank you.



**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think there are quite a few apps you will allow people to install, provided that there is not a problem, right?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Yes.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay, good.

Go ahead, Madam Chagger.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope Stéphan would know that I appreciate the effort. It's something that I think we've been long overdue in doing. We need to be able to have our computers communicating between Parliament Hill and our constituencies, because work in both areas is essential to the work we do.

I know we've had some interactions in regard to what we anticipated the pilot to be and the fact that it's taken longer than anticipated. I do want to manage expectations as to when we thought we'd get computers versus when we got them, because I know I received the computers because I was chosen to be part of the pilot, but they are just being networked this week.

When we're taking on something a lot larger than a pilot, I just want to be mindful of the time it would take.

The whole purpose of the pilot project was to hear examples such as what my colleague is mentioning. I'm assuming that you have some examples where you've had to look at those exemptions to ensure that the programs and services that our colleagues are requesting are able to be part of it.

I also want to confirm that if a device is not on the network, it is able to communicate with the printing machine, and so forth, that might be coming out of this budget.

The costs are just under \$1 million for 2019-20, and then they go up to \$1.5 million, and I'm wondering if that's because the pilot project has taken some of them. Are you then looking at numbers to service all of them?

I also wonder about how—and I know I've asked you this before—when it comes to an election year, there are always some changes. Currently what happens is devices belong to the member's office, and if there is a changeover, you receive those devices. To ensure security and so forth, how are we going to ensure that we are going to keep that? Are those computers going to stay with the office, or do new ones get set when a new member's there?

I will make the point that if the number for 2019-20 has the same resources, or the same numbers of devices and so forth, available as the ones after 2021 moving forward, and it's cheaper to be buying new devices every year, we might want to look at our options.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** There were a few questions.

Let's just start with the election, Madam Chagger. At an election, the process from the House is to recoup all security information that is on the devices and cleanly restart the devices. We do this personally, either on site or from here. We get back the hard discs and we treat them in a way based on our protocols to ensure that there's no security risk to these machines.

In terms of whether any devices that would not be attached to the network would be able to leverage the different devices that are in

the constituency offices, yes, they will be. We're going to work with each of the individual offices, as we are scheduled to be doing in your office on December 3. We're going to be working with the staff, establishing what the requirements are and moving forward with establishing a solution that will meet your requirements.

You're right that it did take a little bit longer, and that's why you've seen that through the process. There are multiple reasons. Sometimes it's availability of the merchandise; sometimes it's also the ability of our vendors to provide us with the services. Also, it's a new model, because now we're entering into servicing the constituency offices remotely with third parties. This model that we're proposing is a shared partnership with industry; we're going to be leveraging an across-Canada partner who's going to be working in the constituency offices. It's also been a learning lesson for them. It's been a learning lesson for us. We're working on it. We're taking that back.

It's also why, when you look at an election, we're not planning a big bang approach. We would be planning this over a year and a half. There would be a transition based on what exists right now. We'd be going from office to office with a large group of people.

As you saw in the budget, we're seeking additional funding during an election period. This funding goes down after an election. The standard funding we're seeking is for the resources to provide the ongoing support, but then in an election we're seeking additional funding that would be sourced through the existing budgets of the House in order to meet the higher capacity.

• (1255)

**Mr. Daniel G. Paquette:** As you see, yes, the funding is ramping up, and as you've already mentioned, it was a challenge to get out, even in the pilot project.

We realize that we can't do the big bang right after the election. In the year of the election, we're ramping up some portion, and then the following year we'll finish the rollout of all of the computers that we have.

That also means that we're respecting some of the life cycling of machines that have been recently purchased. We're not asking for all of the funding to roll this out the first year. We'll do as much as we can. We have almost a 60-40 split of what we can do in the first year, and then we can get up to full capacity during the second.

That's why they're ramping up the funding.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Thank you.

The question that I would just follow up with is on the third party vendors and how they are chosen. Part of being a member of Parliament is being able to use services within my riding and supporting our small businesses. I would like to know how you are choosing them, and then how you are ensuring their security.

When my printer in my riding gets used, it gets used a lot. Then when it's broken, it's broken. I need someone to come in readily to fix it, because there's usually not a backup device.

Thank you.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Thank you, Madam Chagger.

We do have standing offers or competitive vehicles that we create. We sought out someone who had the ability to provide the service across Canada. We wanted to work with one vendor; it's easier from a management perspective. If this does not meet the requirements of individual offices, Madam Chagger, we're certainly going to take feedback and see how we can adapt the vehicle. The point is that if we have to manage it through regions, we've done that in the past with the networking service providers. We've worked with individual providers in areas—for example, in the Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec and out west. We have the ability to do that.

Right now we're working with one vendor because it was the process to start. Certainly with feedback, if we find that we're not meeting the requirements from the service perspective and being able to react quickly to you, we will do that.

Having said that, that one vendor has the ability to create relationships with multiple vendors in all the areas. They are leveraging other suppliers in the areas and working with them in these areas. That's the approach we were looking for. However, we will certainly take that feedback and measure that. If it becomes an issue, we'll certainly look at addressing any partnerships with the finance people.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We're running up against the time, and I know House leaders tend to get very busy shortly.

Go ahead, Madame Brosseau.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** It really wasn't an urgent question. I was just going to ask about the life cycle of computers. We don't really have to go there.

I had some questions more around what happens when we do replace computers. Do they get cleaned up, wiped and resold? I'm thinking how this plays out environmentally.

I'm all for adopting this plan. I think it's great that we can connect the Hill and our constituencies, but there's a problem in the rural ridings. I represent a rural riding, and I'm sure a lot of colleagues have the same problem: Internet is a big issue. When they installed the new computers as part of the pilot project, it was delayed because they had to fix something with the Internet, and bring in a box and extra specialists.

I would like some more information around the environment and how the government is working to make sure that we respect that. That's my big question.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay. Do you have a quick answer on that?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** The life cycle is four to five years. From a security perspective, we take the hard discs and we destroy them. We bring them back here and wipe them so that there is no damage. Then they get recycled through a recycling process.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I have companies in my riding that do recycling of computers.

• (1300)

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Yes. Well, we do have a recycling process.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I'm very interested in how those things are recycled.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We'll have to continue this conversation.

I suspect there might be a willingness to deal with this at the beginning of the next meeting. Can we approve this?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** We can ask questions later. I think I'm okay with approving it.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** My suggestion was going to be that we approve this. If there are further questions, maybe we can have Mr. Aubé come back at another time for just general discussion. I thought our time was running out and that we could approve this.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Members can let me know when they want to have him come back. How does that sound?

We'll approve this, then.

Thank you very much. We'll defer the rest of the agenda to the next meeting.

Go ahead, Ms. Bergen.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** That was going to be the beginning of my first comment. I'm glad that we got that done.

Because we're not going to have time to go through the other items, I would like the committee to consider two points.

Next week when we come back, I think on item 5, financial matters, I know we are looking for more details on those proposals. We would like a more detailed report. I think subsequent to the discussion around the services for MPs in terms of employees, that probably would need to be revised anyway.

Second, we were wondering if maybe we should try to meet a little earlier so that we can get through everything. We have a number of issues in camera that will need to be addressed before we rise for Christmas.

Should we possibly meet a half an hour earlier to give us enough time?

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We can look at that, and we can ask the deputy clerk to work with your offices to see if that can be coordinated.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.







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