



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs**

---

PROC • NUMBER 041 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, May 29, 2014**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Joe Preston**



## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, May 29, 2014

•(1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order, please. We are in public and televised today.

This is meeting number 41 of the procedure and House affairs committee. We're here pursuant to Standing Order 84(1) on main estimates.

We have Speaker Scheer with us today. We know you have some opening comments. Welcome back.

By the way, members, those of you who were away last week with the election in Ukraine, thank you for the work you did, and taking your time away to do that. I wanted to make sure that the world knew how hard some of you worked last week, while some of us were home.

Mr. Scheer, you may start with your opening comments, please.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Thank you, and good morning. It's always a pleasure to come and visit this great group of parliamentarians.

I am very pleased to be here today, along with Marc Bosc, the deputy clerk of the House of Commons, and Mark Watters, the chief financial officer.

We're also joined by other members of the House administration's executive management team: Stéphan Aubé, the chief information officer; Richard Denis, the deputy law clerk and parliamentary counsel; Pierre Parent, the chief human resources officer; and Kevin Vickers, the sergeant-at-arms.

[Translation]

Today, I will be presenting the House of Commons' main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A) for 2014-2015. I will begin with a presentation on the main estimates and will conclude with information on funding requested in the supplementary estimates (A).

[English]

The 2014-15 main estimates total \$413,725,137. This represents a decrease of 3.5% compared to the 2013-14 main estimates funding levels, and a 7.2% reduction from the 2012-13 main estimates. For reference purposes, you have received a document outlining the year-over-year changes for the main estimates between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

I'll proceed by providing an overview of each line item, along with four major themes: budgets for members, House officers and presiding officers; House administration; reductions under the structural operating review; and employee benefit plans.

To start, I would like to speak to the budgets for members, House officers, and presiding officers. Even when we exclude the reductions achieved under the strategic and operating review, this portion of our estimates was reduced by over \$1.1 million. This figure includes both the statutory increases to the sessional allowance and additional salaries, as well as the statutory reductions to the members of Parliament retiring allowances account, and the retirement compensation arrangements account. The reductions seen as a result of both pension adjustments amount to \$1.9 million.

As you may remember, the cost to the House of Commons for contributions to members' pension plans is determined and managed by Treasury Board, based on actuarial calculations.

[Translation]

Let us now look at matters that relate to the Administration of the House of Commons.

First, you will note that the main estimates allocate \$1.4 million for increased transparency resulting from changes to the public reporting of members' expenditures.

This funding requirement is further to the announcement made by the Board of Internal Economy in October 2013 that we will move to an enhanced disclosure format, as well as towards quarterly reporting for the *Members' Expenditures Report*.

[English]

Notably, these changes to improve transparency will include the presentation of service contracts as a stand-alone category, separate members' accommodation expenses for members' per diem expenses, and subdivide the hospitality category. Additionally, more information will be made available regarding the use of all special travel points, and this will, as well, be disclosed quarterly.

The first enhanced quarterly members' expenditure report covering the period from April 1 to June 30 will be published by September 30 of this year.

While the funding requirements are not reflected in these main estimates, I do want to mention that the members' expenditure report for the second quarter of fiscal year 2014-15 will be further enhanced to bring House of Commons reporting for travel and hospitality expenses in line with proactive disclosure practices of ministers' offices. Extensive system changes are currently under way and will be reflected in a further report which will be available to the public by December 31, 2014. Increasing transparency has been a priority of the Board of Internal Economy for some time, and the board remains committed to finding ways in which we can continue to improve.

Moving on from disclosure, the main estimates also allocate an additional \$190,000 in compensation for House administration employees. This funding is specifically used to cover economic increases for 2014-15 for collective agreements ending after March 31, 2014.

[Translation]

Additionally, the main estimates once again account for temporary funding for two parliamentary conferences: the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie and the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic region. These two upcoming conferences will be excellent opportunities to showcase Canada, foster parliamentary diplomacy and advance Canadian objectives internationally.

The funding decisions for both of these conferences were taken by the Board of Internal Economy, in keeping with the recommendations by the Joint Interparliamentary Council.

[English]

The 40th annual session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie requires temporary funding of \$184,000 for 2014-15. This session will be taking place this July in Ottawa.

Further, the 11th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region requires temporary funding of \$132,000 for 2014-15. The event will be held in Whitehorse this October.

There is also a \$25,000 increase that is required for pages' remuneration under the House of Commons page program. In December 2010 the board approved a permanent annual increase to the compensation for pages that is equal to the average increases in tuition fees at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. I am certain we can all agree that we want to continue to recruit top young Canadians for the page program. By linking their pay to their tuition rates, we ensure that they remain fairly compensated for their valuable work. For fiscal year 2014-15 the annual compensation for each page increased by \$536 to \$13,584.

[Translation]

Finally, you will note that the main estimates reflect reductions for two instances of temporary funding: the online recruitment tool and asset management. This combined funding of \$669,000 is no longer required.

●(1110)

[English]

Let us now turn to the reductions that are being achieved as a result of the House of Commons strategic and operating review. As you know, on March 12, 2012, the Board of Internal Economy approved a savings and reduction strategy that is seeing spending for the House of Commons decrease by \$30.3 million, or 6.9% of the overall budget.

For the 2014-15 main estimates, the reductions amount to \$13.5 million and are being achieved through a number of key initiatives that I will cover briefly.

Notably, there are reductions to House officers' office budgets in keeping with the decreases per year for the past two fiscal years. These amount to savings of \$600,000.

Additionally, the reductions include significant savings that have been achieved by the increased use of flight passes and low-fare economy travel. As you well know, regular travel is a necessity for members, and it is an area in which we have been able to collectively achieve substantial savings.

The constituency office furniture and equipment improvement fund will be eliminated in 2014-15, resulting in savings of more than \$1.5 million. This fund was used to supplement existing stocks of equipment and furniture for members' constituency offices. Going forward, members will make use of their own office budgets should they wish to supplement or improve their office furnishings.

Furthermore, savings of \$3.6 million are being achieved through the reduction of personnel-related costs. Since January 2014, employees of members, House officers, and research offices are being granted vacation leave in lieu of automatic lump-sum vacation payments. This change brings our practices in line with the standard practices used by nearly all public and private sector employers.

[Translation]

For 2014-2015, there are further reductions to the Liaison Committee funding envelope. These reductions are in line with measures taken by members of parliamentary committees, as they too continue their ongoing efforts to limit spending and find efficiencies.

Additionally, further cost savings and reductions for the House of Commons Administration are being achieved through a combination of budget reductions, administrative operational efficiencies, attrition and a limited number of workforce adjustment situations.

The House Administration management team has put forth great efforts to limit the impact on its employees, and where there have been impacts, a work force adjustment policy is in place to facilitate employment continuity for indeterminate employees.

[English]

The final item that is included in the 2014-15 main estimates is a reduction of \$1.6 million to employee benefit plans. This is a non-discretionary statutory expense that, in accordance with Treasury Board benefit rates, has decreased from 17.4% of salaries to 16.5% of salaries.

This concludes our overview of the House of Commons main estimates for 2014-15.

I would now like to move on to the House of Commons request of \$5,048,736 in supplementary estimates (A). This request included funding for three items.

The first item, which was previously approved by the board, is for \$81,000 to fund a 1% economic increase for House administration senior managers as of April 1, 2013. This economic increase is in line with the 1% increase approved by the Treasury Board for the executive group throughout the federal public service.

The second item, for \$1.2 million, is for a 2014-15 annual adjustment of members' sessional allowance and additional salaries. This funding is statutory in nature and is based on an index published by Employment and Social Development Canada.

[*Translation*]

The final item included in the supplementary estimates is funding of \$3.8 million required for the ongoing yearly maintenance and life cycle replacement costs for information technology assets. As established in the Long-Term Vision and Plan, there is a need to equip all buildings in the parliamentary precinct with information technology and related infrastructure required for access to information services in order to ensure the effective functioning of Parliament.

The board approved this funding on a five-year basis starting in 2014-2015, and the House Administration must return to the board on a yearly basis to refresh the five-year estimates via the main estimates process.

•(1115)

[*English*]

I am confident you will agree that the 2014-15 main estimates and supplementary estimates (A) reflect both the Board of Internal Economy's and the House of Commons' commitment to continued cost containment. We have been able to find efficiencies and make reductions by carefully analyzing our expenditures. While I am pleased that the main estimates I discussed here today represent a 7.2% reduction over those I presented two years ago, I assure you that we will continue to make every effort to find further efficiencies while providing high-quality support to parliamentarians.

At this time we would all be happy to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your very thorough report.

We will go to Mr. Butt first for seven minutes.

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to start by congratulating you, your executive team, and really all of the MPs in the House for the cost savings and expenditure reductions that have been achieved. I think it has been a real team effort. I think we're setting the benchmark and setting the trend for the reality of the world and certainly Canada today that you live within your means, and that expenditures are reasonable and

according to appropriate rules and within appropriate levels. I want to congratulate everyone involved in that. It's great to see a 7.2% reduction over the past two years, so kudos to all of you for that great work.

I would like to talk about the \$1.4 million that you are requesting with respect to the new MP disclosure system. Can you give us more of a breakdown of the \$1.4 million? Is it software-related or capital-related? Is it for employees who need to be hired to administer the new enhanced disclosure system? I think all MPs are looking forward to this, because it will be a uniform system across the board for every MP disclosing expenditures in a similar way throughout. I think it's a great initiative. I'd just like a better breakdown of the \$1.4 million, please.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Perhaps I could ask Mark to answer regarding some of the specifics in terms of the percentages, but I can tell you that most of it will be going to staff, to bringing on employees to manage all of the transactions.

One of the points that came up during the discussion on this was that members of Parliament and their staff travel a great deal more than even ministers and staff of ministerial offices and other sectors of the public service do, so tracking all of that will require additional human resources. There will also be some one-time software costs and licensing types of expenditures for the computer aspects of disclosure.

I don't know if we have a more detailed breakdown with regard to percentage.

**Mr. Mark G. Watters (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chair, we are planning on hiring—well, we actually did because this was done in the fall of last year, and the committee agreed with the request for supplementary estimates last year to fund this partially—13 employees, 11 of those in my sector, in finance, and 2 in IT, as well as ongoing support for the good care and nurturing of those employees, in terms of offices and supplies, and those types of things, and mostly to look after the interrelationship with the members.

We get a lot of questions from members about their accounts and those are answered as those transactions are processed. Often they're answered again. When the reports are ready to be published, we get questions and members say, "Can you please recall for me and reconcile for me the use of my points? I'd like to go over those reports again in more detail." We do a lot of transactional work and mostly clerical work with members and their offices.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** As a supplementary... I talk to my staff, obviously. They're responsible to look after my stuff. I'm assuming that this is going to be as administratively easy as possible for all concerned. I know there have been some glitches as we've changed some of the reporting mechanisms, as we've changed some of the categories and stuff for how things are allocated and so on.

I'm assuming the goal of this is it will be as user-friendly as possible, both for staff in MPs' offices as well as for the administrative and IT staff that will be doing this and making sure the disclosures are done. Are we able to find ways to decrease the amount of paper flowing back and forth?

One of the things I get a complaint about is it seems we're duplicating things. We're sending stuff electronically, but then we're also sending in all the paper backup. I'm not necessarily opposed to that, but it's time-consuming.

Is there any thought around looking at ways around that to make it more user-friendly and not doubling up the workload?

• (1120)

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you for the opportunity to respond, Mr. Chair.

We are doing two things. First, we're investing in trying to be more proactive with members by providing training sessions. There were six training sessions last week on disclosure and what this means. The thinking behind that is if we can get to you and let you know what our expectations are at the beginning, then we will have fewer problems on the back end, so that people are more accustomed to doing this.

The investments in modifying the technology are being made so that the system you interface with is much easier to use and it becomes a little more automatic for you to use those screens.

We've also recently deployed a fleet of multi-function devices. We have modified and exchanged the equipment that you've had in your offices—faxes, printers and copiers—with a new device that can do all those things.

We've been working with our auditors and with consultants on fine-tuning the methodology by which you're going to be able to scan your invoices and send them to us electronically, to further limit the use of paper and in line with the initiatives of greening the Hill. Again, that might be simpler and you might not have to wait as long for your reimbursements, because we'll already have copies of the invoices.

We wanted to make sure that whatever changes we were making as we were moving away from paper that we were not going to have any issues with auditors in terms of compliance issues and making sure that the records still can withstand the test of an audit. We've been working that out first.

The technology has been deployed to you in waves. The first wave was getting those devices in, and we're releasing more and more functionality. The end of the road will be that you'll be able to scan those invoices in and send them to us and attach them in order to claim electronically rather than physically.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Thank you for your time. I'm satisfied with that. There are other topics I know other members would like to get to, so I'll yield the rest.

**The Chair:** Madame Latendresse, seven minutes for you, please.  
[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have a rather specific question to ask you. Perhaps you can help me.

In light of the revision of the electoral riding boundaries and the addition of 30 members for the next elections, has the House Administration taken any steps to prepare for this? What will this mean in terms of costs?

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I can tell you for sure that the House administration has done a lot of preliminary work. It has been included in some of the previous work that was done, for example, in acquiring office space, namely, La Promenade building and the renovations that are under way in other buildings.

There already is a plan for accommodating the MPs and their offices. I'm told that we have enough capacity with the existing buildings that the House of Commons has access to, to accommodate all of the new members and their staff.

In addition, there are some physical changes that need to be made to the chamber, including some of the IT components for 30 new members, and all that comes with it in terms of computers, devices, software agreements, licensing agreements, things like that.

In terms of numbers, an analysis on what the additional costs will be to provide all of that to the new members will be coming to the board in the short term for the board's analysis.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Thank you. That answers my question quite well.

I would also like to know if any issues or challenges have arisen in terms of premises, goods and services, or even services offered to members. Is the House going to have to hire additional staff to deal with this increase in the number of members?

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes, as Mark alluded to in his previous answer on the new employees required for the increased transparency, new members mean more transactions. It means more claims to be processed. It means more staff to be supported. I don't think the final approximation of how many new staff will be required for the new members has been brought to the board yet, but it will be coming soon. There will be some challenges on accommodating that. In addition, practical things like demand for rooms for MPs who host events or who need to book meetings or for any number of different types of parliamentary functions will be increasing, whereas the number of rooms available may not, in direct proportion.

That being said, our hope is that the new coming on line of the Sir John A. Macdonald building will alleviate a lot of the pressure that's placed on these two rooms and other rooms around the Hill. There will be some challenges and some pressures felt with that, but the House administration is working hard to anticipate whatever those pressures might be in advance. I'm confident that you certainly will notice 30 new members in the chamber, but hopefully the services around the Hill will definitely be able to keep up.

•(1125)

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** You will also have to work harder to maintain order in the House.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** During your appearance before our committee in April 2013, I had asked you a question on the reimbursement of second-language courses for members. In the past, the House used to pay for these, but they are now the responsibility of members' offices. I asked you what consequences this would have, and you answered me that it was much too soon to draw any conclusions.

Do you now have some idea of the consequences that change has had?

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I'll ask Pierre to field that question as it's more directly under his area.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Parent (Chief Human Resources Officer, Parliament of Canada):** Good morning.

We are in the process of carrying out that study. It is not complete. We came to an agreement that we would go to the Board of Internal Economy during the next few weeks.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Would it be possible to obtain the results of that study at that time?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** I do not have the exact figures, but I can tell you that the consequences were quite minimal.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Very well.

In supplementary estimates (A), there is a vote of approximately \$3.7 million for the Long-Term Vision and Plan. Could you give us some further explanations on that?

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I'll ask our IT person to deal with that, but it's basically for the updates to the information technology on the Hill. I know that there are some exciting things coming online in the infrastructure around IT and the types of extras MPs will have to help make their jobs easier as they move around the building. We've kind of come to view IT as any other type of utility that the House of Commons has to provide—lights and water and things like that. It's become as important to MPs' functioning here on the Hill as just about anything else. When you're dealing with the number of employees and the number of members and the types of things we want to be able to do, whether it's video conferencing or wireless networks, there's a significant investment required.

Maybe I'll ask....

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Chair.

I can add to the response of the Speaker. It's basically the funding required to support the investments made as part of the long-term renovations on the Hill, in the four major areas of the broadcasting facilities that we're maintaining—the networking infrastructure, also

the security technologies, the integrated security systems, the integrated trunking radio systems—and also new services, such as the wireless services that we're starting to deliver this year for the precinct. The investments in these new infrastructures are causing new costs relating to the maintenance, the life cycle, and the support of these systems. That's what these costs are about: to fund these new requirements and these requirements for the House.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Thank you.

Is this one-time funding or will they be recurring funds?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** They are mainly recurring costs. We committed to come before the Board of Internal Economy on a yearly basis to submit the necessary costs for the investments in the long-term renovations.

•(1130)

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Because of the time, I'll give you one more question.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Could you give us some more detailed explanations on the cuts to members of Parliament's pensions, and to the pension plan?

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** As I mentioned, that's a result of the statutory changes to the members' pension plan, which saw a significant increase to the proportion that members contribute to their own plan. In terms of the actual breakdown, Mr. Watters has a more actuarial analysis of it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This follows an assessment made by the Chief Actuary of Canada, who works for Treasury Board. When he analyzed these pension plans, he determined that the contributions could be reduced, in light of the new configuration of the plan and the likelihood of upcoming changes in employee contribution rates—the employees being the members—and those of the employer, that is the House. So this is related to the distribution of contributions.

That decision was also based on other, external factors, such as the average age of members, the estimated rates of return of the plan, and the number of people who have already retired. A lot of factors were considered.

Acting independently, the Chief Actuary of Canada determines the contribution rate of the House as employer. He determined that if appropriate, the contributions would be reduced by \$2 million a year, in light of all of these factors as a whole.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Lamoureux for seven minutes.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciated your opening remarks, Mr. Speaker. I do have questions related to the estimates. My questions are going to be directed to the oversight of spending in the House of Commons.

First, Mr. Speaker, if you will recall, on March 24 the Leader of the Opposition, in response to a question about NDP mailings, stated, “We checked and double checked with the Speaker before going that route.”

Mr. Speaker, could you indicate who from the NDP checked with you before sending out these mailings?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Nobody did.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, on April 9 of this year, in relation to the NDP satellite offices, the deputy leader of the NDP, the member for Halifax, stated—

**The Chair:** One second, please. We have a point of order from Mr. Scott. I thought we were going to get through it pretty relaxed.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** So did we.

Mr. Chair, I think you may be aware that there was a point of order in the House asking the Speaker to rule on whether or not the motion setting up this committee was in order. I don't believe we received the ruling yet from the Speaker. I think it would be highly inappropriate for the committee to be going into another study under the guise of an estimates study, and that's exactly what Mr. Lamoureux is trying to do. I think it's very obvious.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux, try to keep it connected to the estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I'll leave it to you to determine what you feel comfortable answering or not answering.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** You're the chair of the committee.

**The Chair:** You're the master of your own destiny today.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's just dealing with the oversight of spending in the House. The question, Mr. Speaker, was that on April 9 of this year, in relation to the NDP satellite offices, the deputy leader of the NDP, the member for Halifax, stated, “Well, we actually checked this out before we did it. We got approval from the Speaker.”

Mr. Speaker—

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Christopherson.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Chair, I appreciate your ruling, and you weren't taking a hard line, but I think you're trying to provide some parameters. Either Mr. Lamoureux's going to be within those parameters or not, and we can repeat that kind of meeting if you want to have that, Chair. We can have that kind of meeting. That's not what we're interested in here. The matter is before the Speaker as to whether or not we're even going to continue in that.

I'm just saying to you, Chair, with the greatest of respect, sir, that if you're going to allow Mr. Lamoureux to go down that line of questioning, that would make it in order if you said so, but if not, we will retaliate in kind and we'll just repeat the kind of meeting we had before, which wasn't the kind of productive meeting that I think we want to have here. I saw the government asking serious questions to

the Speaker. We've been asking serious questions. It's up to you, sir, whether we're going to go down this circus road or not.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux, please try to keep it to the main estimates and supplementary estimates, if you can, please.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's your comfort zone as to what you can answer and can't answer.

• (1135)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to keep it very simple.

Mr. Speaker, you heard my specific quote. I just want to ask a simple question.

Who from the NDP checked with you in regard to—

**Mr. David Christopherson:** On a point of order, Chair, we're either going to go down this road or not. You're going to have to be firmer, Chair, one way or the other. Either we're going to rip it wide open, or you're going to rein him in. It's your call. We're ready for both.

**The Chair:** The question has been asked. The Speaker has the option to answer or not, or we can go the other route. I'm trying to keep this related to the estimates and supplementary estimates, and I understand Mr. Lamoureux is walking a pretty thin line here.

Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes, well, as you mentioned, Mr. Chair, I am here to talk about the estimates and the different reductions, and in a few cases, increases for the House of Commons. I don't know where this line of questioning could end up, so I'll simply say nobody checked with me personally or with anyone in my office.

If you'd like to get back to the subject before us, my sense of the room is that the members would appreciate that. I know I certainly would, because that's what I came here to talk about.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux, a little tighter line, please.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and again, it's just that we're responsible for the oversight of the administration and my questions are, I believe, pertaining to that.

I'll go to Mr. Bosc.

I'm the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North. Can you tell me if, in fact, the rules would allow me to hire employees to be based out of Yukon? I'm thinking in terms of House of Commons employees, not contractors.



**Mr. Marc Bosc (Deputy Clerk of the House of Commons, House of Commons):** Mr. Lamoureux, I think I'm going to answer by saying the following. The Speaker has explained to the committee why he's here. I'm here to support him, and I think that the purpose of our presence here today is to support the Speaker in discussing the estimates.

That's my answer.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux, are you getting a feeling about where I'd like you to go on this?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I'm starting to get a sense of it, Mr. Chairperson, but when we talk about the administration of the Hill and our responsibilities, I think it's a fair question to put forward. As the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, if I wanted to be able to hire an individual outside of Winnipeg Centre, or outside of Ottawa, do I have that ability? Can I hire someone to work out of another province?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Lamoureux, we all appreciate persistence, but I think—

**The Chair:** I'm going to help, Mr. Speaker.

Let's move to estimates, or main estimates, or give your time to the next questioner, please.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Okay. Well, I'm not necessarily wanting to push the envelope too hard, Mr. Speaker—

**An hon. member:** You don't have any envelope.

**The Chair:** Please, Mr. Lamoureux.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** It's interesting that the House of Commons was selling off some silverware, from what I understand, out of the parliamentary dining room, I think it was.

Mr. Speaker, can you provide some further comment as to why we would be doing that?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** First of all, I should maybe make a small correction. It wasn't actually silverware. It was silver-plated. As embarrassed as I am that it wasn't real silver, it was silver-plated.

My mom had some very lovely silverware that we inherited through the family. It requires a great deal of upkeep and polishing and has some additional costs to maintain.

It was reaching the end of its life cycle and it was deemed to be more practical to dispose of the asset and acquire stainless steel—

**A voice:** It was 10 years in storage.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Oh, I see. It actually had been in storage for 10 years without having been used, so it was seen as appropriate to get it off the books.

When the House of Commons disposes of assets, there's a very standard operating procedure for that. It goes through crown assets. It's done with everything from old tables and chairs to.... It moved in the same category.

I should mention that the curator of the House of Commons is a very experienced gentleman who has a great deal of knowledge of cultural and historical significance of all kinds of art and artifacts around the precinct. He did a thorough examination and found it to

be not significant in any way. It wasn't like it had been presented to the House by a head of state. It was just silver-plated knives and forks that didn't seem to be worth keeping after not being in use for 10 years.

• (1140)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I simply thought it was kind of interesting, when I first heard about the fact that we're selling off silverware from the parliamentary restaurant.

Are there other things? Are we selling dishes? Are we selling the kitchen sink? Is there anything else we're selling out of the parliamentary dining room?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I can certainly check into specifics. If you're looking to add to your serving set, we can see what's on the books. But as I said, with normal wear and tear, normal breakage, sets become impossible to replace.

I remember I broke a Royal Doulton three-tiered cake set owned by my mom about 10 years ago, and she almost cried because it's delisted; you can't get that anymore. When those types of things happen, we dispose of the existing assets and look to replace them with high quality, something that suits the precinct and suits the types of offices and restaurant we have, but at the same time is cost-effective for taxpayers.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I never thought of telling my mother, "Oh, that's just a reduction of assets in the household."

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** There are special times for that stuff.

Mr. Lukiwski, you are up for four minutes, please.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Thanks.

I have a couple of quick questions. I don't see that you mentioned this in your overview, so I'm not sure if you're prepared to answer, but I have a couple of backup questions as well.

Right now there is, I guess, a trial or test program going on in the House with, I don't know how many members involved—50 or more—trying out iPhones as opposed to BlackBerrys. I understand this is a six-month test to see if there's a second platform that would be suitable for the House. I'm wondering what financial impact that may have and if, in fact, at the end of the six months the decision is that we can have iPhones as an option to the BlackBerrys, what financial impact that might have as well.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** There were some costs, obviously, in acquiring new physical devices but also, I believe, in licensing costs, but I'll maybe ask Stéphan....

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** This is given in the Speaker's response. The costs have been minimal. We currently have the infrastructure to support the iPhone, so we didn't have to invest in new infrastructure to support iPhones. What we had to do was expand our existing infrastructure to buy specific licences for the pilot, so the costs were really minimal. That will be reassessed if we decide to move ahead with the introduction of the use of iPhones, but it hasn't been decided yet. We're waiting until the end of the pilot to seek feedback from members.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** This is kind of a non-monetary question but is related to the same thing. I've heard there may be some security issues with the iPhone as opposed to the BlackBerry. Can you comment on that?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** I can only comment on the fact that the approach we have implemented for the use of the iPhone is as secure as we can get right now. In the context of how we are providing the service to the members, it meets the current security requirements for the House to deliver the services that we're delivering, being some of the mail, and the contacts, and the calendaring that we're providing. We are still reminding members not to use any of the phones, including the BlackBerrys, to store and use confidential or secure information.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thank you.

Do I have a couple of minutes left, Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I'll move on then to some of the items you have covered in your overview.

Again, I concur with my colleague, Mr. Butt. We appreciate all of the efforts you've made and House administration has made to try to reduce costs under the strategic operating review. I think you've been doing a very good job, so congratulations to you.

With regard to that, there are a couple of areas in which I'd like to get a little bit more detail. I'm referring particularly to the cost savings you have seen with parliamentarians primarily using flight passes. You said there were significant savings, but I haven't really seen a comparative total as to what we were experiencing before using flight passes and what we are experiencing now.

Could you give us a flavour of that? I understand it is significant, which is great, but exactly how much money are we saving?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay, \$5.5 million is the number we have seen in cost savings.

As those of you who fly regularly know, when you buy an à la carte ticket, you pay the market price, which can fluctuate depending upon when you're able to purchase the ticket, whereas a flight pass locks in a much lower price in advance. Even if it's a last-minute booking, you're not paying the posted rate on a website. You're getting that initial locked-in price, and because of the bulk purchasing by the House of Commons, we get a significant discount.

● (1145)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** That's great to hear.

You mentioned \$5.5 million in savings. Is that over a 12-month period, an annual saving, or is it since the time you first started using flight passes?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** That's per fiscal year.

**A voice:** Wow.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lukiwski.

Mr. Scott, for four minutes, please.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being here.

I have a couple of questions.

First, I'm not sure if it's going to be happening this year or if it's already happening, but is there some kind of a plan to begin to integrate the security in the entire precinct between House and Senate? If so, does that have fiscal implications? Will there actually be economies of scale or some kind of efficiencies that are worth noting?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes, and I am glad you asked that. It is something that I personally feel very invested in.

We do have several reports, including one from the Auditor General, who several years ago highlighted it as an area of concern. When you think about it, from Bank Street to the Hall of Honour, you go from the City of Ottawa to the RCMP to the House of Commons on one side of the Hall of Honour to the Senate security on the other side. Those are seams from a security perspective; each transition is viewed as a seam which poses security issues. Then, of course, there's the cost that comes along with that.

There is a move under way. I know I said that last year. If there's a speed below glacial, then we've found it.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I can say that there is a renewed interest in it. There has been some movement. I don't want to go into too much detail, because some of it is around security, or into how those operational things work, but there will be a savings seen by reducing the redundancy—two separate administrations, two separate protocols, and things like that.

We've also had analysis that shows there will be an improvement in the security aspect as well.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you very much.

The next question may go through you, Mr. Speaker, but Mr. Watters might be in a better position to answer it.

We had some questions from Mr. Butt about the amount of extra budget that will be needed to have a properly functioning office with respect to higher transparency of MP expenses. It was indicated that a fair chunk of that would be towards personnel.

I'm just wondering, have we gotten to the point where...? Are there any issues around health of employees related to stress due to workload flow in any departments, including in finance? Are we absolutely content that we have the right number of personnel, or are we actually getting to the point of losing efficiencies because of stress issues?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but we hear the bells, and without unanimous consent we can't continue.

Mr. Speaker, we thank you for coming today.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Thank you for having me. It's always a pleasure. It was good to see everybody.

**The Chair:** We did get through most of that round, so I'm pretty happy with that. Thank you very much.

I had a couple of questions too, but I guess I'll have to submit them in written form.

- (1145) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_
- (1150)

We will suspend, and we will return here after the vote.

**The Chair:** Now, we are adjourned.

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>