

OGGO

Questions Taken on Notice - December 12, 2022

Travel Expenditures Related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary since 2014

1. What were the implications/effects or results for protocol when the previous administration implemented the deficit reduction action plan?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: When the previous administration implemented the deficit reduction action plan, do you recall specifically what the implications were for the protocol department? For example, in Dallas, you re- moved 10% of the budget. Do you recall if there was something similar at the time?

Mr. Stewart Wheeler: I would be happy to take that question on note. I wasn't working in protocol at that time, so I would be unable to say.

Evidence p. 9

Answer:

There were 12 main cost-cutting initiatives at DFATD under the Deficit Reduction Action Plan of the previous Government. While none of these focused on the Office of Protocol directly, a number of them produced cuts in various elements of administration across the department which resulted in a total of approximately \$98,000 in cuts to the reference level of the operations budget of the Office of Protocol.

2. Can you provide in writing a step-by-step action plan of what your department will do to stop this recurring issue so that in one year, five years, ten years the same conversion about ensuring sounder management and prevention processes?

The Chair: I wonder if each of the departments represented today would put in writing and submit to the committee, step by step, what your plan of action is in plain, basic language, please, not bureaucratese. What are departments going to do to ensure that in one year, five years or 10 years, there's not going to be another OGGO committee saying 20/20 again, and that we're actually going to stop this issue from recurring.

Evidence p.16

Answer:

Joint response from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, Global Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

The Governor General plays an important role in international relations by travelling on State and working visits at the request of the Prime Minister to achieve specific objectives and deliver key messages. A visit by a Governor General takes place when the Government of Canada

considers it to be the most appropriate instrument to advance specific Canadian objectives in a particular region or country.

In recent months, a working group on in-flight catering has been established of departments whose mandate include supporting these activities. These departments are recognisant of the committee's understandable concerns and have a renewed sense of commitment to ensure public funds are managed responsibly. On the overall visit side, the implicated departments have reviewed their existing internal processes and have initiated increased coordination at all planning stages to facilitate ongoing efforts for efficiencies and impact of the overall visit. Below is a detailed breakdown by department of the specific steps taken to date. These groups will meet regularly and on an ongoing basis to evaluate if desired cost saving efficiencies are materializing. Improved communication between departments is essential to ensuring cost effective management of diplomatic visits.

The Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (OSGG)

The Governor General travels internationally when requested to by the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada. The budgets and procurement related to these visits reside with lead government departments, particularly Global Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence. The OSGG has engaged actively with these lead departments, as well as with the Privy Council Office, to review current planning processes regarding the government's international agenda in an effort to increase planning time and leverage cost-saving opportunities wherever and whenever possible.

Once a visit is initiated, and in collaboration with lead government departments, OSGG will review all aspect of visits including procedures and processes on an ongoing basis. To date, this has taken different forms, such as:

1. Examining the ways visits are planned to seek additional opportunities to align visit and foreign policy objectives with programme development – seeking specificity, precision and leveraging opportunities, wherever and whenever possible;
2. Evaluating the benefits and costs of proposed modes of transportation;
3. Examining the number of employees required to support the visit and advance the government's objectives;
4. Exploring opportunities for further and ongoing collaboration/information-sharing with partner departments;
5. Examining opportunities for collaboration with host governments, and
6. Leveraging Canadian expertise present or active in host countries.

The OSGG has clearly articulated to lead departments and officials responsible for the planning and execution of visits, as well as internally, that there is a shared responsibility to raise red flags and propose efficiencies whenever and wherever possible. For example, the OSGG recently contacted the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Offices of the Whips of the different parties to suggest the possibility of coinciding a pre-planned FAAE committee study tour to Finland with the Governor General's upcoming State visit to the same country in an effort to combine and leverage resources. While

the Committee and Whips' Offices confirmed that such a collaboration was not possible on this particular occasion, this outreach by the OSGG illustrates our commitment to OGGO to continually look for opportunities to promote efficiencies and savings. Lead government departments have undertaken similar reviews and we are collaboratively exploring all such possibilities on an ongoing basis.

In its *[2nd Report on The Governor General of Canada: Role, Duties and Funding for Activities](#)* tabled on Friday, April 2, 2004 (3rd Session, 37th Parliament), the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO) directed two recommendations to the Office of Secretary to the Governor General:

5. That the Office of the Governor General report on its annual projected plans and priorities and the anticipated results of its activities. In that report, the Office of the Governor General should state the expenses borne by the federal departments and agencies supporting its activities.
6. That the Office of the Governor General prepare an annual report on its activities, including its financial statements, and that that report be available on its Web site. The report could be based on that of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General of Australia (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Since 2006, the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General has published an Annual Report and financial statements* which describes the key activities of the Office, along with the costs to deliver its programs. The report illustrates how the Office supports governors general in fulfilling their responsibilities, and documents support from federal departments and agencies.

Reports and statements are published on our website:

<https://www.gg.ca/en/the-office/reports/annual-reports>
<https://www.gg.ca/en/the-office/federal-partners>

* From 2006-2007 until 2010-2011 the financial statements were included in the Annual Report. As of 2011-2012, the financial statements were published as a standalone document.

Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

The main areas of responsibility of the department include the alignment of foreign policy objectives and the logistical management of the planning/delivery of international visits of the Governor General and State visits in Canada. The department has strengthened the overall process with better communication with partners. For example, on in-flight catering, the approach to menu selection has evolved significantly (no menu alterations, confirming the number of passengers).

The Office of Protocol is constantly re-evaluating needs of traveling staff to ensure they have effective communications connections with Ottawa when abroad. This includes leveraging technology and assets that Canadian missions abroad already have in their possession. Routine reviews of the necessary requirements of other departments and the standardized documents used in the planning of a visit are being updated frequently.

The department continues to enhance processes and reduce redundancies during international travel. The department is constantly re-evaluating costs associated to visits and fostering an environment that encourages red flags to be raised when potential expenses seem atypical.

In additions to the detailed steps outlined above, the department continues to implement high standards of financial stewardship through the various thorough actions below.

1. Continue to collect and disseminate information relating to the visit to ensure all partner departments have timely and necessary information they require to deliver on their individual mandates.
2. Continue to develop specific visit objectives that align with Canada's foreign policy objectives.
3. Continue to monitor and enforce internal financial controls in place for all budgets under GAC management during all phases of a visit, the planning, implementation and wrap-up.
4. Continue to approve expenses and monitor visit budgets that cover mainly delegation travel, accommodation, transportation and programming expenses.
5. Continue to disclose expenses associated to high-level visits via Public Accounts.
6. Continue to adhere to all government financial and procurement policies and procedures.
7. Continue to solicit quotes for multiple hotels, suppliers and venues and negotiate better contract terms or rates to achieve efficiencies and cost savings when possible.

Department of National Defence

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) provides safe, secure, and reliable air transport for Government officials, either in Canada or abroad. National Defence takes its responsibility as a steward of public funds seriously and is committed to minimizing flight costs while ensuring that safety standards as well as operational mission requirements are met.

The Office of the Secretary of the Governor General is not involved in the selection of the food served onboard these flights.

National Defence alongside the Office of Protocol at Global Affairs Canada have already taken concrete actions to reduce catering costs and increase efficiencies on all flights transporting Government officials.

For example, National Defence and Global Affairs Canada have established and agreed to standards to reduce costs, including in the following areas:

- Meals: RCAF flight stewards work with airport catering services to establish options for a meal, which are presented to the Office of Protocol of Global Affairs Canada for review and approval. Once a menu is finalized and approved by Global Affairs Canada, the RCAF procures the selected menu from the caterers. The same standard meals will be selected for all passengers. Meals will be selected from the caterer's pre-set menu. Overage will be limited to 20%, informed by dietary restrictions, as applicable.
- Snacks: Snacks will be minimal and sourced in Trenton, Canada for the entire trip. If additional snacks are required, they will be sourced from local grocery stores.

- Drinks: Non-alcoholic drinks will be sourced in Canada for the entire trip and the choices will be reduced. Drink garnishes will also be eliminated.
- Other: Newspapers, magazines and flowers will no longer be purchased.

As a service provider, the RCAF will continue to review costs associated with the transport of government officials and will continue to identify and implement cost saving measures.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Under the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Regulations*, the RCMP is mandated to provide close protective services to the Governor General, both in Canada and abroad. Protective measures are intelligence-led and are proportional to any threats and risks assessed by the RCMP, in collaboration with external partners, to ensure designated officials are provided with the protection that is appropriate and required.

The RCMP is not part of the decision-making regarding travel plans or agenda. As such, the protective plan developed by the RCMP is based on decisions that are made by the Governor General's Office.

The RCMP continually reviews its policies and procedures to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, and sound stewardship of its resources.