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CANADA

## **Board of Internal Economy**

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TRANSCRIPT

**Thursday, March 1, 2018**

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## Board of Internal Economy

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• (1120)

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Good morning, colleagues, and welcome again to this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy.

[Translation]

I would like to welcome Ruth Ellen Brosseau as a new member to the Board of Internal Economy.

Welcome.

The first item on the agenda is the minutes of the previous meeting. Are there any comments on that?

[English]

Are there any comments on the previous meeting's minutes?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Is it agreed to approve the minutes?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Is there any business arising from the minutes?

Seeing none, we'll go on to number 3, harassment prevention in the workplace.

[Translation]

The floor goes to Mr. Patrice. He will speak to this difficult issue first.

**Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have been looking forward to this meeting on the harassment prevention program; the topic we are addressing today is timely, even urgent.

The past weeks and months have brought to light a number of instances of abusive behaviour that have taken place in the House of Commons over the years. Such behaviour was always unacceptable. Today, it is simply intolerable.

[English]

No one—not members, nor the people who work for them, nor the employees in the House administration, nor volunteers—should be subject to harassment, bullying, or abuse of authority. I know from our own discussion that you share my views. With your support we

will continue to strengthen the harassment framework that is already in place. As important, we wish to ensure that everyone is aware that information and help are available. I will now turn things over to Pierre Parent, chief human resources officer, who will tell you about the harassment prevention program, how it works, and how we can work it even better.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** The floor now goes to Mr. Parent.

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

Thank you, Mr. Patrice.

Accompanying me is Myriam Beauparlant, manager of the Respectful Workplace Program in the House of Commons. Ms. Beauparlant and I thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about the harassment prevention framework in place in the House.

First of all, let me confirm our commitment to dealing with any situation of harassment within the organization and to supporting members of Parliament, House officers, research offices and their employees, both in the constituency offices and on the Hill.

[English]

Providing a harassment-free workplace for everyone in the parliamentary community is our priority and we are proposing additional steps to reach that goal. Today there is a framework in place with different components, which provides members of Parliament, House officers, research offices and their employees, as well as House administration employees with mechanisms to prevent and resolve alleged harassment situations.

First, in December 2014 the board adopted the first House of Commons policy on preventing and addressing harassment, which applies to members and House officers as employers, as well as their employees and employees of research offices.

Second, in June 2015 the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs adopted the “Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment”. It came into effect at the start of this Parliament. It covers member-to-member situations and secures the commitment of members to provide an environment free of sexual harassment. Every member is required to sign the pledge form, and all members have done so.

In addition, the House administration policy on harassment prevention and resolution in the workplace has been in place for several decades and applies to all House administration employees. The latest version was updated in April 2015.

In all the policies there is a process in place for filing informal and formal complaints, investigating and reporting, appealing decisions, communicating findings, and ensuring that corrective action is taken.

[*Translation*]

Under the policy, I have to submit annual statistical reports to the Board; the reports are then made public. As indicated by the two annual reports I have provided to date, 10 cases of harassment were reported in the first reporting period in 2015-16, and 19 in the second period in 2016-17.

It is important to note that the report identifies two categories of cases: requests for information and complaints. For example, three of the 10 cases in the first reporting period and six of the 19 cases in the following period were complaints.

• (1125)

[*English*]

The policies emphasize impartiality and confidentiality and so protect the rights of both the complainant and the respondent. It is vitally important that we make sure the person feels safe talking about these difficult situations and that we protect the private lives of the individuals who raise these issues and ensure that both parties benefit from fair due process.

What do we do to support this framework and to address issues that arise? During their orientation, members are given information regarding the policy and code and affirm their commitment to supporting a harassment-free workplace by signing the pledge form. As I mentioned earlier, all members of the 42nd Parliament have signed the pledge form.

With the launch of the policy, the House administration offered members and their staff access to an informal conflict resolution program known as the Finding Solutions Together program, for which Myriam is responsible.

Key to this program is access to Myriam, who is available to offer members and their employees counselling on workplace conflicts, including harassment prevention and, if appropriate, mediation. This program has been used by members and employees in the past two years and has been instrumental in resolving some of these cases as early as possible in the process.

[*Translation*]

Another essential service under the harassment prevention framework is training. An online training session was launched in December 2016 to further raise awareness among MPs and their employees about harassment and about available resources. The one-hour training session features short informative sequences, scenarios and questions to provide additional support for harassment prevention.

At the end of the training session, participants may self-identify by voluntary reporting. As of January 31, 2018, 647 people reported that they completed the training. As it is available online, this

training allows employees to schedule the session whenever is convenient for them and also allows constituency staff to participate.

[*English*]

Of course, we also recognize the added value of offering in-person training in a classroom setting. As such, we have been working with an external training expert to develop a three-hour in-class session, which will start shortly. Whips have been very supportive of this initiative and will ensure their respective members are available for the training. We anticipate being able to offer this session to all members before the summer break.

We are also developing additional training sessions, and we will be working with the whips' offices to provide further training to all staff, both on the Hill and in constituencies. The Speaker has asked that we provide the necessary support for staff and members and address any opportunities to improve what is currently in place.

Consequently, we are making the following recommendations: first, that employees of members, House officers, and research officers, including interns and volunteers, be provided with clear, easily accessible information regarding the code and the policy as part of their orientation, more specifically with their letter of offer; and, second, that the classroom training being developed be made mandatory for members and House officers, and that the training sessions be made mandatory for the employees of members, House officers, and research officers, including, of course, interns and volunteers.

Finally, having worked in this field for 25 years, I know that the foundations of our program are strong. That being said, there is always room for improvement.

I'm happy to take any questions from the board members.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We'll see if there are any questions or comments from members of the board, after which we'll go to the recommendations in due course.

Ms. Bergen.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition):** Thank you for your presentation and the good work you've done.

I do have a question. I am scheduled in, but I haven't taken the course yet. Can you tell us a bit about what's in the course? I'm thinking that for a lot of people, as they're guiding their employees or wanting to get their work done, they want to do it in a respectful way, and sometimes there is a fine line between giving orders or asking somebody to do something and being disrespectful.

Can you let me know how we've developed our harassment policy training so that we aren't kind of guessing on that, but that we actually have professionals and best practices and we can give very clear guidelines to our members on what's appropriate and what is not appropriate?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** Yes, I'm happy to report that on Monday morning the Clerk's management group and I test-drove the training. It will address just that in the sense that, as you mentioned, there is a fine line between frustration and harassment and what it constitutes, and what the next steps are for a behaviour to constitute harassment.

We've built that training session to basically change the culture. The entire training session is designed around that.

Of course, you'll get definitions and what constitutes harassment and some of the guidelines that can indicate what could be harassment and what is not harassment, but the entire three-hour session.... Of course, we would have liked to have maybe six hours or a two-day training session, but in three hours I think what we have been able to achieve is impressive, and I'm sure you'll be very happy with the results.

• (1130)

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Just to be clear, where did we pull the information? How did we come to the material that's part of the training session?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** We dealt with an expert firm, ADR Education, that's basically specialized in harassment training. We worked with them because we didn't want to provide members of Parliament with a training session that you would give someone at the beginning of their career. I think you have a different population and you have different needs.

I have always said that you are different because you are members of Parliament 24-7. We have to address that and we have to be mindful of that. You have to address behaviour that could occur in a social event over the weekend because you interact with your employees. These are important factors that we need to consider.

We did work with specialists in the field but we did have input on what constitutes a reality for members of Parliament.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Strahl.

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

This is a question that is currently before the House, regarding harassment in the workplace—not to presume the outcome of the debate and vote on Bill C-65—but let's assume that does pass through both the House and Senate as is. We are embarking—certainly every Conservative member of Parliament, from the leader on down, will be taking this training. I just want to make sure that we're not taking training that will need a remedial course right away because things have changed with Bill C-65.

Are the possibilities outlined in Bill C-65 taken into account as this training has been developed?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** As I mentioned earlier, the training is very culture oriented. We're confident that, with any change that legislation will bring, it will still remain relevant. What could change is the material that we produce as information. We'll produce—and you will see more and more of these awareness pieces from my office. For instance, we're working on flow charts and information, so you can understand the policy much better.

If that needs to be adjusted, that's an easy one. We're monitoring Bill C-65. I know that the regulations are not drafted yet, so it's

difficult for us to form an opinion. I'm confident that, if we're talking training only, it's going to stand the test of time.

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

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Based on your recommendation, the harassment training will be available to MPs and their employees, but there is no mention of frequency. I imagine there would need to be a refresher from time to time, every year or something like that.

What do you intend to do about that?

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** In fact, I had the opportunity to speak with people at the whips' offices, and each of those offices committed to making members of their respective parties available this year. So we hope to train all members of the current Parliament this year. It will be a matter of maintaining this level of training.

At the beginning of each new Parliament and when there are byelections, we will have to make sure that everyone gets the training. Also, in future Parliaments, we will be able to assess the need for refresher training. I realize that it is not easy for members to free up three hours, but we will be able to work with the whips' offices based on members' availability.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Could you tell us whether there are any best practices on how often you have to provide refresher training?

• (1135)

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** No best practices are defined. Having said that, I do not think it's good practice to give training at the beginning of a person's career and forget about it for 20 or 30 years. I think it would be appropriate to have a refresher on certain things at least every three or five years, because some concepts may have been forgotten. This is something we could consider.

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

Ms. Brosseau, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (House Leader of the New Democratic Party):** I would just like to say thank you very much for the presentations. I would like to commend you for all the work that has been done and the collaboration. I think this has been a long time coming. I'm happy that we're here and we're taking these steps in the right direction.

I think there's been discussions from all sides that we would like to make sure our staff members are included in this process. I would like to know how we could make sure that our staff, on the NDP side, would use some of the services and that they would be accepted. I'm hopeful we can get agreement at committee.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** We've already started working on this part of the training. The challenge for staff is probably more kind of logistical. As you're aware, most of the staff members are in the constituencies.

My initial discussion in early January was to maybe take advantage of the annual professional development day that some parties have. I think your party's was last December. I'm hearing interest to maybe have these sessions earlier.

We're trying to work with our provider to see if some of these sessions could start before the summer break. The logistics will probably present a challenge. Definitely, it's a priority for us.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I was going to clarify that it's more for the mediation. You're speaking more to the fact that we have offices in our ridings, and we're going to have training for our staff back home. We're obviously going to be doing ours in June, when we have our staff from constituencies come up. I'm talking more along the lines of making sure that our staff have access to the same—

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Just to be clear, members, the board may recall, the NDP was not included under the policy, because you had your own policy in relation to your collective argument. But now you're asking to be included.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Yes.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Is it agreed that that should be the case, that we amend the policy to do that?

That's agreed.

Anything else, Madame Brosseau? If not, I have Ms. Chagger.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** I would just be building off my colleague's comments. We know there's 20 sessions that are for members, and I'm wondering if there is a defined number of sessions that will be available for employees.

I like the idea of the mandatory training. I'm wondering if you're referring to the online or the classroom. Are we differentiating between the two? What is the thought process?

I would also like to highlight that this place is constantly changing. Members are coming and going; there are by-elections. When a new member comes in, regardless of whether it's at election time or whether it's at a by-election, these services be rendered.

I recall when I first got elected, an overwhelming amount of information is provided initially. Some of it is retained and some of it, unfortunately we don't really remember. I still can't remember one password. The good people here have been able to give me a new one. We get through those times.

I just want to be mindful of the conditions when new members come in. I think constant refreshers are necessary; it's no different from CPR first aid. I think we should take the time to define what that looks like to ensure that people are always up to speed, especially new employees, new members.

I want to thank you for the good work. I want to understand how many sessions will be available. I would love the assurance to know that the 20 sessions that are available for members will be enough for all members to participate.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** That password is probably “password”.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** The 20 sessions were an approximation. If we need 23 or 25, that will not be a problem. We're working with the whips' offices on the logistics. One good thing that came out of this

communication is that every party decided to be more heavily involved if I had open rooms.

Every party has reserved sessions. Then the scheduling is done with my office in co-operation with the whips' offices. If we require more sessions, we'll organize more.

● (1140)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** You referred to parties. I believe that when it comes to wanting to create a new culture, that parties should not be able to override mandatory training. Therefore, I would ask about independents.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** We're dealing with independents. So far, those we have reached out to have accepted. I'm still waiting for one or two answers. We're dealing with the Bloc Québécois and the Groupe parlementaire Québécois. We're going to deal with those groups separately.

The goal is to ensure that everyone has access to the training.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Of course I would note the second recommendation is proposing that:

The classroom training on harassment that is currently being developed be made mandatory for Members and House Officers, and that the training session be made mandatory for employees of Members, House Officers and Research Offices (including interns and volunteers).

I think that helps to answer your question.

Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** On that, if we're going to talk about the recommendations that have been presented, certainly we have no issue with the first one, which talks about this being part of the onboarding process. When a new staffer is brought on right now, there are mandatory documents that are provided, and the employee must indicate that they've read, and they sign. I think making this part of that is a good idea. It catches everyone at the beginning of their time here.

The second part is about mandatory training when you indicate that something is mandatory or indicate that there is a penalty for failure to comply. I would look to this group to get some feedback. If that is mandatory, and the whips will take care of it in terms of enforcing that for their parties, does that then fall to you, Mr. Speaker, to enforce that for independents?

What does non-compliance look like? Although we have the ability to encourage members, and we have no problems in this Parliament getting people to sign on, one can envision a situation where a very independent-minded member would say, “I don't need this. I've done it before in my past life.” If we're talking about it being mandatory, to me that indicates that, if a member fails to comply, there will be a penalty of some sort. I wanted to get an idea from the administration or from feedback from my colleagues as to what that looks like and how can we enforce it.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think I'll start by asking Mr. Parent to give his sense of how he expects this to work.

**Mr. Pierre Parent:** In this round what I'll do is—because it's not mandatory by the board; the whips or the parties have made it mandatory—provide each whip's office with a list of attendance so that enforcement will be done from the whip's office.

If in the future, the board makes it mandatory for all members, including independents, for those who don't have a whip to enforce it, I'm not an expert on how the board, the Speaker, or the Clerk would enforce it. I don't know, maybe the Clerk or a law clerk...?

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** If I might just—

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think clearly it has to be reported to me or whoever is the Speaker at the time, of course, because there is no whip for that member. I suspect we're going to have some conversation about what happens in either case.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I guess the question would be, you said that there was 100% compliance with people signing the pledge for the code of conduct, That was probably...

I'm not trying to be difficult. I think this will be easy to enforce. If you're putting that in there, I think you want to have some idea of what it looks like if there is no compliance. If a member goes rogue and says, "I'm not doing that", will you garnishee their wages? Will you not recognize them in the House? I'm serious. What are we doing to make this real other than saying it's mandatory, but if they don't do it, there's no penalty. I think we need to talk about that.

• (1145)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think that we should have this discussion about what the consequences will be. One obvious thing could be that it's reported here, that I report to the board if certain people... Usually the whips have a pretty good capacity to get the members to co-operate, especially with things like this that everyone should do anyway, although I'm sure it can be challenging at times on some issues, at least, although probably not this one.

The other thing is, if they're not going to comply with this, and they resist it, the board might ask itself what we should do about that person getting resources to hire people. Should we say they can't hire unless they deal with it? Again, it's a question, and I'd like to hear the view of the members of the board on that. Is it sufficient, for starters, to have their name reported, because that obviously is going to be, I would think, embarrassing for a member to have that publicly reported. Do we go beyond that? Do we need to at this point?

What do members feel we should do in that regard? I'm glad you've raised this question of the consequences for people who don't comply.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Obviously, there needs to be a time frame given. There's information in the budget about people going on longer leaves now or people who are ill. There are circumstances that arise that prevent people from perhaps doing it as quickly as another member could. This would have to be if someone is acting in bad faith. We go down this slide of who's making those determinations, and probably, again, Mr. Speaker, it would be you, but I would certainly support the threat or the promise of the list of people who have not yet taken that test. In this public forum, I think they would feel some pressure from their constituents as well to engage.

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

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** I wonder if it would be wise if we come back to this and talk about it.

Even in your suggestion about maybe withholding funds from them to hire somebody, we would be penalizing an employee, and that is not what we would want to do. If legitimately with this person

there are real reasons they haven't taken it, we also would never want to embarrass them, because it's hard; you can't take that back. We have to think very long and hard about it.

My hope would be, and I think we will see from what happens with this initial training, that everybody wants to do this. We should be planning that we'll have 100% support. If somebody doesn't, we'll work with them and find out why and find ways to mitigate whatever reasons there would be that they're not taking it. We should go on the presumption that all members of Parliament want to do the right thing for the right reasons, as opposed to us punishing them because they're not behaving the way we want them to. Maybe we should think of it in those terms and then look at what we can do.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** If the board wants to have measures at some point, we can talk about that. Obviously, the members of the board can discuss that. Of course, the alternative is, if it's going well and people are all taking this training and there are no problems, that's great. We could say, if there's a problem, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it and figure it out. I'll leave this for further discussion.

In the meantime, are we ready to accept the two recommendations as written? Is that satisfactory?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Parent and Ms. Beauparlant, thank you very much for being here.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to the proposed legal fees policy.

[*Translation*]

I invite Mr. Dufresne, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, to take the floor.

• (1150)

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne (Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, members of the Board of Internal Economy, thank you very much.

I am pleased to be here to present our proposal to adopt a new policy on the reimbursement of legal fees incurred by members of Parliament. The new part is that, in certain circumstances, it also applies to employees, as we will be able to discuss.

Under the leadership of the Speaker, we have looked at this policy on legal fees for the purpose of protecting employees. We want to ensure that Parliament is a harassment-free workplace and that this policy on legal fees reflects the core values of human rights and victim protection, among others.

The purpose of the new policy we are proposing is first to update the information and expand the criteria for the reimbursement of legal fees incurred by members.

Among other things, we want to make it very clear that legal fees will not be reimbursed if a member of Parliament is deemed at fault, that is, if a court or decision-maker determines that there has been a violation of the law, such as in instances of harassment. This principle will be made very clear.

We also seek to increase the proactive disclosure of the spending of public funds as part of those reimbursements. What is certainly new is that we want to provide additional support that aligns directly with the approach to preventing and resolving harassment situations in the workplace on Parliament Hill. We are proposing measures to ensure that employees and members affected by harassment are on a level playing field as much as possible.

We want to provide more support at all stages of the process. We want to provide it at the beginning of a situation, when a matter of harassment is raised. We also want to provide financial support to employees and MPs to obtain initial legal advice. In the same way, we want to provide support at the end of the process, if the allegations are confirmed.

[English]

This new policy that we are putting forward is very much designed to provide greater protection from harassment and to provide greater clarity in terms of the criteria that would apply for reimbursement of legal fees.

This occurs in situations where members must seek legal counsel from the outside. My office is legal counsel to the institution, and we provide legal services to members, but in certain circumstances, including harassment allegation or litigation, members must seek outside legal counsel. In those situations, they must seek reimbursement of those fees from the board.

The current practice of the board with respect to the reimbursement of legal fees is very much to focus on whether the litigation flows or the legal matter flows from the member's parliamentary functions. The reimbursement is made at rates pre-established by the board, which are pegged to those of the Department of Justice. They are reviewed by my office and a recommendation is made by my office as to the appropriateness of the reimbursement and it's done on a case-by-case basis.

The expenditures for those reimbursements of legal fees are reported annually in the Public Accounts of Canada. That is the current practice.

What we are proposing to you today is to include additional criteria to achieve those principles, purposes, and objectives that I've highlighted at the outset, which are, again, to ensure that a member is not reimbursed for his or her legal fees in a situation where the allegations have been substantiated. A member who is found to have harassed an employee, sexually or otherwise, would not see their legal fees reimbursed. The board would not be financing this legal representation for members in such cases.

We would want to provide greater disclosure of the funds expended. In addition to the public accounts annually, we would provide quarterly reports. The board would provide quarterly reports of the amounts including the number of requests. That would provide greater information in terms of the public funds expended for those purposes.

●(1155)

In cases of harassment, we would provide additional measures to support employees and members involved in situations of harassment. We've heard time and time again "in the context of harassment". Before I was appointed law clerk, I was a human rights lawyer for 15 years. It is fundamental to have initial support and adequate information so that complainants, individuals who feel they have been the victims of harassment, understand the process and understand their rights. I think Madame Broseau, in one of her earlier questions, alluded to that—namely, to what extent are we accompanying complainants in the initial stages? We would propose additional support for members and employees in such cases specifically, with at the outset financial support and at the end of the process the possibility of having legal fees reimbursed.

Specifically, we propose to include the following eligibility criteria when members make a request for their legal fees. This would be the general approach in all cases. The member cannot have initiated the legal proceedings. This is meant to be support to a member who is a defendant, not a plaintiff. The legal fees must be incurred in the discharge of the member's parliamentary function. That has to remain, because that is the underlying condition for support from the board. The request for reimbursement would need to be made at the conclusion of the proceedings. This is so that the board can have all the information, in particular to assess the next criterion, which is that the allegations against the members have not been substantiated. If the allegations are substantiated by a decision-maker, then the legal fees would not be reimbursed. If they have not been substantiated, then the board could decide to reimburse them. The member needs to have complied with the legal fees policy, which is to say that they need to have kept my office informed of the process and developments in the matter. The last criterion is that the board must determine that reimbursement is appropriate in the circumstances. You retain this ability to determine that in a given case, even if the other criteria are met, it would be inappropriate to reimburse those legal fees.

Under this new approach, again, it's very clear that a member against whom allegations have been substantiated will not see their fees reimbursed. The board retains the discretion. I would continue to provide recommendations to the board in terms of approving such requests, and I would apply those criteria in all cases.

The reimbursement would continue to be at the rates pre-established by the board, which is to say no greater than at the Department of Justice and the Senate. Indeed, they could be reassessed periodically. Currently, they are certainly pegged at the rate of the Department of Justice.



The board would retain the ability to grant exceptions, as it does, generally, but we would propose, as a transparency mechanism, that if the board did that, this would be reported in the board's meeting minutes to reflect that an exception to the policy has been made. The reporting would continue, as I've indicated, in the public accounts. There would be additional disclosure of the aggregate amount of legal fees reimbursed to members and employees under the policy each quarter, including the requests for reimbursement.

With respect to harassment, we feel that additional support is warranted for complainants, employees and members, in cases of harassment, so we would propose, only for cases of harassment, an additional two measures or forms of support. One would be financial support of up to \$5,000 for both a member and an employee in a situation of harassment. This would be for the purpose of obtaining independent legal advice at the outset. This would be managed by my office. The request would be made to me or via the Speaker. I would make the decision to grant or not that support of up to \$5,000. The condition would be simply that it's a matter of harassment involving a member and an employee or involving two members.

This would not need to come to the board. It would provide early and flexible support for employees and members at the early stage, because it is helpful to have a better understanding of the rights, of the issues, of the likelihood of success, and so on. We feel this would be beneficial. It would provide support to people in a vulnerable situation at the outset of a case.

● (1200)

As an additional measure we would provide for—and this is very much to put the complainants and the members, the employees and members, on more of a level playing field—complainants to seek reimbursement of their legal fees in situations where the allegations have been substantiated. So there again that request would come at the end of the process, and a complainant who has seen her allegations upheld and substantiated would have the opportunity to seek reimbursement of legal fees. This is a very new measure, but we feel that it would provide additional support to individuals so that they feel confident that they can raise those in terms of process, and that this would support a harassment-free workplace.

That is the outline of the policy, which we feel would be beneficial and would provide greater clarity and greater support in preventing harassment. With this, I will open to your questions.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. LeBlanc, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dufresne, thank you for the presentation.

At the outset, it seems to me that these are perfectly appropriate recommendations. As you said, that will positively change the balance between MPs and employees in terms of the reimbursement of legal fees and protection. In the past, employees did not have access to this type of support. In my opinion, the step you are proposing today is extremely important and positive.

I just have three fairly specific questions, because it's important for everyone to understand a few distinctions.

[*English*]

You said, Philippe, that all of this of course has to be in the discharge of a member's parliamentary function. That's a phrase that we hear at the board often. I think it would be interesting for you to explain why that's the case, and why in the context of other expenditures that necessarily has to be part of the requirement.

The other thing that I think would be useful would be to clarify that when you talk about the \$5,000 upfront support available to employees, which I think is a very positive suggestion, the reimbursement of legal fees that you referred to at the conclusion of a particular process has nothing to do with the payment of a settlement. There has been some confusion when people have asked me about whether the board is paying settlements—in order words, monetary awards—separate and apart from reimbursing legal fees that you and your office audit as being proper and being subject to that chart of hourly rates, which the Government of Canada maintains at lower than when our Speaker practised law. He wouldn't have charged such low rates, so congratulations, Philippe.

I think it's important to draw the distinction between the reimbursement of the fees, which are separate and apart from... Obviously under no circumstances—I would suggest, and I think you can confirm—is the board paying settlement amounts, monetary awards. That clearly is a different discussion that is not part of reimbursing legal fees, but again I've seen people conflating the two in public comments. I thought that was interesting for you to clarify.

Finally, there is, again in the public discussion of this issue, some commentary around why there isn't, in the disclosure, greater transparency, which you're proposing, around these expenditures. Again that is something that I certainly think is positive. There is a concern or a question that's often raised about why we don't use the names of the person, for example, the member, who is being reimbursed. I think I understand, and perhaps you could refer to other similar workplaces—municipal councils or provincial legislatures—that have adopted similar policies to what we're discussing today with regard to why there is a valid reason around some of that disclosure. I suspect and believe it's around inadvertently identifying, for example, people who have been subjected to harassment. It could be used to discourage victims from coming forward. I wonder if you could enlighten us as to why, in your view, that transparency finds the right balance.

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Absolutely.

In terms of your first question on parliamentary functions, that is very much the overarching theme with respect to appropriate uses of parliamentary resources made available to parliamentarians. In the members' bylaw that the board has adopted, it is very much the guiding principle that the resources made available to members are only for the carrying out of members' parliamentary functions. There is a definition of what does not constitute parliamentary functions: private interest matters, electoral re-election matters, support of a political party in elections, and so on. But it is a recognition that this is to support the work of members as parliamentarians, and so we feel that this legal fees policy should be no different in terms of its scope.

With respect to the \$5,000 upfront, the purpose of this would be very much to provide this initial support to get legal advice, and it is separate from the request that could be made after the fact by a member or a complainant. They could both get up to \$5,000 to get that advice, and then at the end of the process the member could make a request if the allegation had not been substantiated, and the complainant could make the request if the allegation had been substantiated. If there had been a settlement—and this is linked to your third question—both of them could apply to the board to seek reimbursement of their legal fees, and then it would be up to the board to decide whether and to what extent it's appropriate to do so, and the sixth criterion that talks about “appropriate in the circumstances” would become relevant. I would be providing you with my advice in the circumstances, having regard to the circumstances of that settlement.

In terms of paying for the amounts under the settlement, that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about reimbursing legal fees that the parties incur. In terms of a settlement, and there's a provision for damages or amounts to be paid out, that's a separate matter. It has not been the board's practice to reimburse such settlements. In the last five years it has occurred on three occasions, and none of those involved allegations of sexual harassment. It's not the board's practice, and the board can certainly decide to make it a practice that it is not done in any case. But it is a separate point from this legal fees policy proposal.

In terms of disclosure, absolutely, confidentiality is an important element in dealing with these things, certainly from the complainant's perspective to feel free to raise these things in confidence. We'll be talking about this in the upcoming item in terms of how we have those discussions about reimbursing legal fees. In my view, it's important to have these discussions in private because we do not want to have the identity of complainants revealed in this context.

In terms of the publication of the expenses, the best practices are that you don't indicate the name of the parties involved, but rather the amounts.

• (1205)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have just a few questions.

Some of the incidents that have been in the public have raised questions. Does the policy only address situations with current members and current employees? Should that be my understanding of how this would work, or could a former employee bring a

complaint against a current member and take advantage of this fee, this new policy?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** We're proposing that this legal fees policy be effective as of the date it is decided, so as of today. If a request is made, and it deals with a situation that has occurred while a member was a member or the employee was an employee of the member, we would look to see if this was something that was related to the parliamentary functions. Is this something that has occurred here in the context of a member's parliamentary functions? If so, we would bring it here with a recommendation.

Now, as to the timing of it and so on, I think these would be circumstances that could be considered in the appropriateness of reimbursement.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Right. For the \$5,000, that does not require the board's intervention, but you would have the discretion to do that. With situations that involved that former employee or former member where the allegation was harassment or misconduct in a parliamentary function, would that come back to the board? Did you envision this \$5,000 upfront fee would apply to people who perhaps are not currently either elected or employed?

• (1210)

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** That's a decision for the board to make. My proposal would be that claims made as of now could be eligible for the \$5,000.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Regardless of whether that person was still unemployed. I want to make sure I understand that.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Let's say you're in January 2020. There's just been an election and someone comes forward in January or February with a complaint. It was in the office circumstance, whether in the constituency or on the Hill. It seems to me that's part of the Parliamentary function. The key question is the parliamentary functions.

Again, as Mr. Dufresne has said, it is up to the board to determine whether they figure that should.... My view is that it should, but I am open to views of members on that.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I am just trying to understand.

Obviously, the board has the ability to make any decision on legal matters that are brought before it. However, what we're asking for is with regard to this \$5,000 amount that is provided to a complainant and a member. That's where I would like some clarification. If that's envisioned for current employees and current members, that's okay. I think there could be situations, though, where we may be asked to weigh in on whether it would be appropriate for someone who's left the Hill and later says they experienced something. Are they then covered by this?

We can maybe talk about that. We certainly support the move to go to this for current employees and current members. That's probably the easiest way.

To clarify, the up to \$5,000 amount that is given to both parties in a complaint is not necessarily a cheque at the beginning. Would any attempts be made to recover that amount should the member be found to have committed misconduct or the complaint be deemed to be vexatious?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Mr. Strahl, the answer is no. The purpose of the initial \$5,000 is for both to know that they have this amount of support without risk to them. They get this advice, they can go to mediation, they can assess the strength of the case without having to worry about having to reimburse that at the end of the day.

In excess of \$5,000 is where the risk management comes into play, because the reimbursement of that would depend on the outcome of the matter. We feel that the initial \$5,000 would be beneficial so that both of them can get advice.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Will those \$5,000 amounts be reported with the proactive disclosure as they happen, quarterly, or will those be just reported at the end of the process when additional fees are paid out? I'm trying to figure out when that will be proactively disclosed.

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Those would be proactively disclosed quarterly. Every quarter we would—

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** In the quarter in which that process began, not at the end of it.

Finally, the proposal was, as it says there, that the matter settles or is substantiated. What happens if a case is abandoned?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Well if a case is abandoned, it has not been substantiated. If it is abandoned in the sense that it ends, so there is a resolution of the case in that sense, the claim could be made and it would be looked at. In those situations where it's not substantiated, it's going to be up to the board to determine whether it's appropriate and the extent to which it's appropriate. If you have a situation where it hasn't settled—typically if it's abandoned—you could look at that as a settlement and that there's been an agreement to not push it further. We would consider those....

We don't want to create a disincentive to resolving matters, which is why we haven't only said it has to be substantiated. If you did that, then parties would have a disincentive to come to an agreement in appropriate cases.

•(1215)

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

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

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Thank you. I have two things.

First of all, to Mark's point, I think he brought forward a very valid question. We should maybe decide that at least as of today, it will be for current MPs and current employees, but then possibly come back with some recommendations. Geoff, to your example of somebody who is defeated in an election, but whatever may have happened would have happened very currently, that's a different scenario than....

There are all kinds of different scenarios that are worth us looking at and then coming back with some recommendations.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Maybe Mr. Patrice could give us a thought on this. I think that would be helpful.

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** I think it's a very good point that has been raised. Obviously, we could apply the policy to current members and employees, but in terms of former members or former employees, it means a case-by-case analysis. If that arises, I would suggest that we come back to the board for guidance.

It varies in terms of scenario. You could have a sitting member, a former employee, a current employee, or a former member. We would have to have the facts of the case to really assess it, and we could come back to the board for guidance in terms of the policy for the future.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think we're creating greater certainty if we adopt this policy and I think that as we go forward and consider these things, there is a value in having certainty before something happens rather than when it happens.

I don't think it's ideal for the board to be deciding it case by case but as Mr. Patrice has said at this point if we proceed as proposed, we would have to do that in those cases. If we decide later this is what we should have as our policy and set that out, that's certainly an option available.

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

I just have one question and forgive me if this has already been discussed.

This is an employee to MP. What about employee to employee? I'm thinking many times in our ridings we're not around all the time. There could be staff to staff issues. Can you just remind me what the policy is on that?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** In terms of the staff-to-staff issue, if this is something that occurs with the staff of members, then the member as the employer, has an obligation to resolve it. The harassment policy applies and the processes unfold.

What we are proposing here in terms of legal fees policy would not apply to those types of situations but would rather apply to situations where there is a complaint against a member, whether the complaint is filed by another member or by an employee of the member.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Ms. Brosseau.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I'd like to thank you, Philippe, and the team who worked really hard on elaborating this. I think it's really important in the context that we're in with staff, people who work in our offices and in our constituencies, our volunteers, and our interns that we're able to level the playing field for them.

I just wanted to maybe have some clarification on the reimbursement of legal fees when it comes to complainants who find themselves in situations where it's a he-said-she-said, and where there might be lack of evidence. I know that the \$5,000 is for the purpose of obtaining independent legal advice at the outset. That is where a member and the complainant will have the option to kind of weigh the risks. That's when they make a decision whether to move forward with other proceedings.

I'm kind of concerned because the reimbursements are only possible for those claims that are substantiated at the end of the matter or if the matter is settled. I'm kind of nervous that this would be a kind of disincentive for those who feel that they have been harassed. This might be a way that they feel more nervous to come forward.

I was wondering if we could maybe get some clarity, and I was wondering if it would be possible to see if the policy could be adjusted to expand the eligibility for the legal fees to those claimants unless the allegations are found to be frivolous, malicious, and vexatious.

• (1220)

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** To your last point, I think that would be a decision for the board to make. What we are proposing we feel is already a departure from the level of support that is ordinarily provided to complainants in situations like this. What we are trying to achieve is to say to them at the outset, “You will get this advice so that you can very much assess the strengths and weaknesses and make those decisions.”

If it is a very difficult case to prove, then that's going to be part of the assessment that's being made, but the person would still be much more supported by having that initial legal support at the outset.

In terms of moving forward under this approach, it is true that the decision to go to the end of the litigation and to wait for the ultimate decision would be a decision that would have to be made by the complainant and also by the member. This is because there is no certainty for either, and the policy is very much dependent on that outcome if it goes to a final decision. That would be part of the decision and the assessment that has to be made.

Our goal in this policy is to say that we are providing advice that is not insignificant so that those difficult decisions can be made, and we are providing that you don't have to go the end of the matter. If it is resolved in another way, the reimbursement can still be available.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I think the concern that both myself and Madam Brosseau have raised is with the wording “if the matter is settled”. I think perhaps, when I first read that it was that there was a settlement. Perhaps we could just get some clarity.

Can a matter be settled without there being a settlement? I know that's parsing words, but I think we had some comfort that a matter that was brought forward that was either found to be substantiated, found to be not substantiated, or was simply both parties agreed that it was lesson learned, or whatever.... Perhaps that's where some of these concerns are being raised.

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think a settlement can occur; you can settle a case without having a financial settlement. Is that what you're talking about, a financial settlement?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** I think as I was responding to one of the questions I used the words “if it's resolved”. Perhaps that's a better word, if the matter has been “resolved”. You may not have a written settlement agreement and so on and so forth. But the point is that the situation has been resolved. It has ended, but not by way of a decision by a decision-maker. If you agree, we can certainly make that change to the language. If it suggests that this somehow has to be a legal settlement of some sort, we don't want to make it unduly restrictive.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We would change that wording to “if the matter has been resolved”. Or “if the matter is resolved”, I guess is the right phrasing.

Is that agreeable in terms of that particular provision? Yes, okay.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** We obviously only want to be considering these things if there's no possibility that there's further action that could be taken. We don't want it to just be we paid a bunch of tens of thousands of dollars in fees, and it might not be over. I think that “resolution” would certainly make me happy.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Good.

Madam Brosseau.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** I just want to clarify.

If there's a situation where there's a lack of evidence, another he said she said, the MP's fees would be paid, covered, and the complainant's fees would not be covered? I just wanted to make sure that we're....

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** If the matter is not substantiated against the member, the member can claim the legal fees. If we're in a situation where there has been no decision, so it's resolved, both decide they want to end it by way of an agreement or whatnot, then both could seek reimbursement of the legal fees.

If there's a final decision, and the final decision says that there is substantiation of the allegations, then the member cannot claim them. If it says it's substantiated, the complainant can claim them.

• (1225)

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Okay.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Anything else?

Then is it the agreement of the board to approve and adopt the proposed legal fees policy as we just amended and for it to come into effect immediately?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** So ordered.

Number five, amendments to the Board of Internal Economy's bylaws.

We return to you, Mr. Dufresne.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The proposal we have here for you is an amendment to the rules of procedure of the Board of Internal Economy and its governance by-laws.

Let me start with the first proposal, which is to clarify the possibility of having some in camera discussions on certain types of topics. This proposal stems from the fact that, as a result of the amendments made by Bill C-44 to the Parliament of Canada Act, the meetings of the Board of Internal Economy are now open to the public. However, section 51.1 of the Act states that they shall be held in camera in one of the following three situations. The first is if the matters being discussed relate to security, employment, staff relations or tenders. The second is if the circumstances prescribed by a by-law made under paragraph 52.5(1)(a.1) exist, that is, if a by-law adopted by the Board of Internal Economy provides for certain circumstances, and those circumstances exist. The third is if all of the members present at the meeting give unanimous consent.

[English]

The Parliament of Canada Act explicitly authorizes the board to adopt a bylaw prescribing circumstances in which matters are to be dealt with in camera. Parliament has left it open to the board to consider whether it be necessary or appropriate to include such circumstances in one of its bylaws.

At its meeting of June 8, 2017, the board asked the House administration to take the necessary steps to prepare for this possibility, and to review and prepare draft bylaws for consideration, taking into consideration the best practices of similarly situated bodies and organizations.

We have done this review, and we are here to provide you with our recommendation that such bylaws should only include two types of situations.

The first is matters subject to solicitor-client and litigation privilege. The second would be sensitive matters respecting the health or family situation of an identifiable individual. We recommend the inclusion of those two types of situations after having reviewed the practices in municipalities, in board equivalents in the Senate and the provinces, in hospitals, and in university boards of directors.

We've looked at those bodies, the rules of those bodies and the practices, and we have found a general consensus to have discussions about solicitor-client and litigation privilege matters be done in private, and as well to have discussions dealing with personal information relating to individuals dealt with in private.

In terms of the personal information, we are proposing a narrower scope than the personal information that can in some cases include financial matters. Our proposal would limit it to matters respecting the health or family situation of an identifiable individual, because financial matters may well be relevant and necessary to have discussion in public. We feel, based on the practice, that situations that would be health matters of—and we say identifiable individuals so it wouldn't necessarily only be members—anyone being discussed in terms of health. It could be a member's child. It could be the health of someone who is being discussed at the board for any reason. In terms of family situations, we could think of situations of adoption, custody, divorce, and these types of things if they were relevant to the consideration. Perhaps a request for an exception or a request for support we feel would not be appropriately discussed in public.

As well, with the new approach to legal fees that you have approved, there isn't the possibility of complainants making requests for support that would come to the board. There again, it is fundamentally important to protect those individuals and their confidentiality.

• (1230)

In discussing them, we feel that protecting the confidentiality would be important. It is, as I've said, consistent with practices of similarly situated bodies. It is consistent with case law from the Supreme Court of Canada, which has recognized that both solicitor-client litigation privilege and personal privacy are fundamental quasi-constitutional rights, so these are elements we feel would be appropriately included in a bylaw, but we would not recommend

anything beyond that so exceptions to the open nature are kept to a strict minimum.

With that, I will open to your questions.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Are there questions or comments?

Monsieur LeBlanc.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Again, Philippe, thank you. I think that strikes the right balance, for the reasons you outlined. I am also pleased that it's consistent with other public institutions and quasi-public institutions that deal with these issues. Frankly, the Senate has, for some time before this board became public, wrestled with this and has found, in my view, the right balance on some of these personal matters.

My question is with respect to security matters. I remember having been on the board after the difficult events in 2014 and there were meetings, for example, with security officials who talked about improvements that were possible, and so on. Would that be a unanimous consent circumstance where, if the security professionals were presenting operational changes or expenditures around security equipment, I assume the board would give its consent? I don't imagine you have those conversations in public.

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** It's not necessary because in the act security is already provided for as an in camera-type of discussion. The first situation where it says, "the matters being discussed relate to security, employment, staff relations, or tenders", so those are, by virtue of that provision, in private and—

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** And these bylaws go beyond the strict elements of the Parliament of Canada Act, is what you're saying?

**Mr. Philippe Dufresne:** Those bylaws are contemplated by the Parliament of Canada Act in the second set of circumstances, so it would supplement what is already in the statute.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Thank you.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Anyone else?

In that case, is the recommendation approved and adopted?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I would suggest, just for the sake of not making Philippe go through it, we would like some more time to consider part B of the "Amendment to the Governance and Administration By-Law". I would ask that we table that at a future meeting of the board.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Agreed, and we'll do that. We'll table that and hold off on that one.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Dufresne.

[English]

We're on to the "Board of Internal Economy Web Presence Modernization". This is for information.

[Translation]

The clerk will be presenting this topic to us.

**Mr. Charles Robert (Clerk of the House of Commons):** Good afternoon.

Over the last three Parliaments, the Board has taken steps to provide more information to the public. In particular, it has published its by-laws and the Members' Allowances and Services Manual, increased the extent and frequency of the disclosure of MPs' expenses and published the minutes of its meetings.

Last June, Bill C-44, Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1, became law, and one of its provisions required that the Board's meetings be open to the public.

•(1235)

[English]

In keeping with this approach of openness, the House of Commons has undertaken a redesign of the board's web presence, the completion of which was achieved earlier last month. Prior to the completion, an interim solution was put in place for the first public board meeting in October, and many of the features highlighted in this presentation have been accessible to the public since then.

The new website features improved navigability and accessibility, a more intuitive user experience, and an aesthetic that is aligned with the branding that characterizes the House of Commons web presence.

All information relating to the board's proceedings can be found on the meetings page. This landing page includes webcasting capabilities; and general information about meetings, agendas, transcripts, and minutes. Broadcasts of the board's public meetings have also been made available for viewing through our webcasting service, ParlVu. Links to audio and video feeds are available for live streaming, as well as on demand.

[Translation]

Notices of meeting are normally published one week in advance and the corresponding agendas are available in the following days. In addition to being published on the Board's website, the notice of meeting is also sent to the public through our Twitter presence and the home page of ourcommons.ca.

The existing publication search tool has been adapted to include the Board's transcripts. The search conducted in those transcripts may be refined by topic, text, person speaking or any combination of those criteria.

The minutes, which serve as official records of decisions made by the Board, are organized with the help of an index.

The redesigned section entitled "Reports and Disclosures" contains the past and most recent versions of the Members' Expenditures Report, the Public Registry of Designated Travellers and the Financial Statements of the House of Commons, as well as other reports from the House Administration. All those documents are accessible with one click.

[English]

The bylaws and policies page features a wealth of resource material including the newly reformatted "Members Allowance and Services Manual". The membership page is consistent with the look and feel used for House of Commons committees.

In summary, we believe that the new web presence provides a refreshed look and enhanced format and a better user experience.

If you should have any questions about the changes that are implemented to enhance to web presence of the board I'm certainly prepared to try to answer them.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** When I think of the broadcasting, I'm glad that the lights here aren't as harsh as they are in the House of Commons. There's probably a little less glare for members who have to deal with this or for the public who have to see it.

Are there any questions or comments?

No. Okay.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Philippe.

[English]

Oh, sorry. You're Charles. Don't get confused about that.

Sorry about that. I'm still thanking Philippe for his presentation earlier for an update.

We'll go on to number seven. This is also an update, I think, on the modernization of printing and mailing householder formats.

We have Mr. Benoit Giroux, who is director general of parliamentary precinct operations.

[Translation]

I believe that he is accompanied by Julie Allard.

[English]

**Mr. Benoit Giroux (Director General, Parliamentary Precinct Operations, House of Commons):** She couldn't make it.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay.

Mr. Giroux, you have the floor.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am here to present you with an update on the printing and mailing services project to modernize printing and mailing householder formats.

Let me put this into context. You surely remember that you approved the modernization of new formats at your June 8, 2017 meeting.

There are currently 28 different householder options available in letter, flyer and booklet formats. Before ordering the new formats, we conducted an in-depth analysis, and we studied the level of use for each format.

In the new suite of formats, 15 options will be available in letter, flyer, booklet and card formats. All formats will be available in one colour, two colours, or full colour, and will be printed on Enviro Satin paper to improve the quality of colour printing.

These changes are in line with the results of a market analysis, and will provide members with products that follow the most up-to-date publishing trends, which will allow them to communicate with their constituents using easier-to-read products.

Consultations took place with party research offices prior to the new formats being approved by the Board of Internal Economy. The research offices participated in meetings, and received an update in January 2018 as the official launch date nears.

We have initiated the launch process, and we are here today to show you the changes that will be made.

● (1240)

[English]

We're very excited as we launch the transition period. Actually a testing period has started with the group of selected members, and we have members from each party who are participating, and that period started on February 9 and will go until March 30. Basically, they will produce their householder in the new format, and it allows us also to test it and make sure we're ready to implement fully. It will be launched on April 16, 2018. The new suite will be available, and from that date all new submissions will be in the new formats. Obviously, we will offer extensive support to members to transition, and there will be personalized support as well, and we will even assist them in converting their text into the new templates.

We also launched a multi-faceted communication plan. There will be road shows to the different members' offices, where we will go visit each member and make sure that they have all the available support they need to transition. As well, we'll provide all types of guides and we've produced how-to videos on sourcing, which will be readily accessible starting at the end of March and early April.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Giroux.

Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Strahl, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you, Mr. Giroux. Can you just comment on the cost per piece perhaps as when you go to full colour are we

going to see a dramatic increase in cost to members office budgets, or taxpayers in general?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** I will compare apples to apples. I'll take the example of a 32-page booklet. The current format is in a 32-page booklet. In the new format, in full colour, it will be the equivalent cost or less. All the formats that are currently available converted into full colour will be at the equivalent cost or less.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** That's good to know.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I gather this is because we changed a bit of the size. Is it technology that's changed as well?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** In the design of the new formats we also ensured that we were efficient in the production of all these formats. We have also, within our current budgets, through our life-cycle investment of equipment, made wise choices in terms of investment so we could produce those at a lesser cost.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Terrific.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** We're maximizing our efficiency.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Good.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I like to hear that. Does anybody else have a question or comment?

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Giroux. We are grateful for the work you have done.

We have now reached the end of our meeting.

I get the impression that Mr. LeBlanc is disappointed it's over.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I recall that, at the end of question period, you are the one who is disappointed, Mr. Speaker. You could have felt the same about this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

● (1245)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Very well.

Thank you very much, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.







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