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# **Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, May 28, 2003**

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## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Wednesday, May 28, 2003

• (1555)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.)):** Welcome to the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

We are here for one purpose and one purpose only. We have a series of votes that were referred to this committee under the estimates. We have heard testimony on some aspects of that, both in the main committee and in the subcommittee. I have a series of votes to put to the committee. Each one of these are debatable motions, but hearing no debate we will pass them. Right?

Mr. Epp, given that you are the sole opposition member here, shall I make it a convention that when these votes pass we pass them on division?

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** And that I represent eight members....

**The Chair:** Done.

I am going to call them.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Public Service Commission

Vote 110—Public Service Commission—Program expenditures.....  
\$113,930,000, less the amount of \$28,482,500 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 110 agreed to on division)

GOVERNOR GENERAL

Department

Vote 1—Governor General—Program expenditures.....\$16,853,000, less the amount of \$4,213,250 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

JUSTICE

Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Canada

Vote 40—Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada Program—Program expenditures.....\$4,398,000, less the amount of \$1,099,500 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 40 agreed to on division)

Vote 45—Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada Program—Program expenditures.....\$9,817,000

**The Chair:** Mr. Bryden.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I won't be able to support that particular vote.

I would like, if I may, to make a comment on why I choose not to.

**The Chair:** It's a debatable motion, Mr. Bryden.

I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Mr. Bryden. If you will permit me, I will call the rest of the votes, and after having done them, we will deal with that one.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Yes, perfect, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Okay.

(Vote 45 allowed to stand)

PARLIAMENT

The Senate

Vote 1—The Senate—Program expenditures.....\$41,705,950, less the amount of \$10,426,487 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

PRIVY COUNCIL

Department

Vote 1—Privy Council—Program expenditures.....\$102,156,000, less the amount of \$25,539,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

Canadian Centre for Management Development

Vote 5—Canadian Centre for Management Development—Program expenditures.....\$25,894,000, less the amount of \$6,473,500 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 5 agreed to on division)

Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat

Vote 10—Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat—Program expenditures.....\$3,576,000, less the amount of \$894,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 10 agreed to on division)

Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board

Vote 15—Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board—Program expenditures.....\$22,304,000, less the amount of \$5,576,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 15 agreed to on division)

Public Service Staff Relations Board

Vote 35—Public Service Staff Relations Board—Program expenditures.....\$5,840,000, less the amount of \$1,460,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 35 agreed to on division)

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Department

Vote 1—Government Services Program—Operating Expenditures.....\$1,840,511,000, less the amount of \$613,503,666.67 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** It's \$1.8 billion, Tony. That's a lot of change here that you just blew off like that.

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Do you want to read it and then we'll do on division?

**The Chair:** No, that's okay.

Vote 5—Government Services Program—Capital Expenditures.....  
\$368,684,000, less the amount of \$92,171,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 5 agreed to on division)

Vote 10—Government Services Program—Grants and contributions.....  
\$6,111,002, less the amount of \$1,527,750.50 voted in Interim Supply.

(Vote 10 agreed to on division)

Communication Canada

Vote 15—Communication Canada—Operating Expenditures.....\$62,726,000,  
less the amount of \$15,681,500 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 15 agreed to on division)

Vote 20—Communications Canada—Grants and contributions.....\$31,250,000,  
less the amount of \$7,812,500 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 20 agreed to on division)

TREASURY BOARD

Secretariat

Vote 1—Secretariat—Operating expenditures.....\$151,617,000, less the amount of  
\$37,904,250 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

Vote 2—Secretariat—Contributions.....\$18,600,000, less the amount of  
\$6,200,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 2 agreed to on division)

Vote 5—Secretariat—Government Contingencies.....\$750,000,000, less the  
amount of \$687,500,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 5 agreed to on division)

Vote 10—Secretariat—Government-Wide Initiatives.....\$20,783,000, less the  
amount of \$5,195,750 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 10 agreed to on division)

Vote 20—Secretariat—Public Service Insurance.....\$1,450,900,000, less the  
amount of \$362,725,000 voted in Interim Supply

(Vote 20 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Now, Mr. Bryden, you had a comment to make. That is all of them, with the exception of number 4, vote 45. Mr. Bryden, if you could make that succinct comment.

• (1600)

**Mr. John Bryden:** Well, I don't know whether it will be succinct, but I have a number of concerns about this particular vote. One of them is that the privacy commissioner is asking for almost double the amount of money that the information commissioner has. They have parallel roles as officers of Parliament.

I raised these concerns several times when there was a debate, particularly yesterday. I was disappointed that the privacy commissioner was not able or chose not to come when he was invited to the committee to defend his estimates yesterday.

The fact that the privacy commissioner failed to come, the fact that I have serious questions about the amount of money he is spending, and also the fact that I did ask questions in committee yesterday of the representative from the privacy commissioner's

office who came in lieu of the privacy commissioner are all concerns.

The questions are in a letter that I presume you are going to table today, Mr. Chairman. You must have tabled it, because I have it.

I wish to inform my colleagues that the answers supplied are inadequate in the context of the questions I asked. If you would permit me, I could explain in detail why they are inadequate, point by point; or if you prefer, we can do that at another time.

**The Chair:** May I make the following suggestion? The issue that Mr. Bryden has been raising.... For the benefit of those members who are not regular on this committee, he has been before the committee several times on this. There are some other issues outstanding on this particular file.

I suggest, Mr. Bryden, that we hold a vote on this. We can hold a recorded vote, if you like, so we can register your particular position on it.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Please.

**The Chair:** I would undertake to call a steering committee of the committee to discuss how we proceed on some of your concerns, because some of them involve issues under estimates and some of them involve other issues of the operation of the office. That, I suggest, would be more appropriately dealt with in a forum like that.

With your permission, what I would suggest we do is take the vote on this, dispose of the estimates now.

One of the reasons for not continuing is simply that if we don't deal with these today, they are deemed done anyway. That is the dilemma we have with the process right now. But we will come back to the table specifically on the issue of some of the concerns of the privacy commissioner's office at our earliest convenience.

**Mr. John Bryden:** That is fine with me, Mr. Chairman, with just one further comment, and that is, when I get the Hansard of yesterday's hearings, I would like to suggest to you the form of a letter you might send to the privacy commissioner that would answer at least some of the requests I made, because the document I have before me does not address my original question. But I need that Hansard before I can do the letter. Otherwise, Mr. Chairman, please call the vote.

**The Chair:** Carolyn Bennett.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, you had suggested that it is within the capability of the committee to lower an estimate. I think in terms of the lack of attendance and the problems Mr. Bryden has, I would suggest that we lower this estimate by some token amount—I don't even care if it's \$1,000—to let them know, as a marker, that we are not happy with it, so it comes down \$1,000. This is what committees are supposed to be able to do.

**Mr. John Bryden:** May I speak to that, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** I think for that to take place, someone.... This is a motion. Let me be specific. The motion is that "Vote 45 under Justice (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada Program) in the amount of \$9,817,000 less the amount of \$2,454,250 voted in Interim Supply, be...". It is an amendable motion, so a person can move an amendment to that motion should they so desire.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett:** You move it, John.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Then I take my colleague's point. I think she is very right. I can't believe I didn't think of it, but I would like to move an amendment. I think her point is well taken. I would like to move an amendment that the estimate be lowered by a token amount to express our displeasure in the amount of—

•(1605)

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Punish them.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett:** One thousand dollars.

**Mr. John Bryden:** I think \$1,000 is a token. I think we have to do the token, although \$1,000 isn't very much. Let's lower it by \$100,000. That's a real token.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett:** Let's have something that will pass.

**Mr. John Bryden:** No? All right, then.

**The Chair:** Could I make a point? I suppose it's not appropriate for the chairman to comment on these things, but this chairman is not particularly appropriate at most times.

The power to decrease a vote is an important power, and it's a power that I believe the committee should exercise. I don't believe it should be exercised capriciously.

In fairness to Mr. Bryden's position, I think you have spent a lot of time identifying some significant concerns that have not been responded to appropriately. So I agree that some expression of the displeasure of the committee, should the committee choose to do that, would be appropriate. But to pick numbers out of the air, to do anything other than a token amount to demonstrate that the committee is displeased, or to play beyond that without a substantive underpinning of research—

**Mr. John Bryden:** I agree.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett:** I agree.

**The Chair:** —that says what it should be I think would be inappropriate.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Chair, your words and my colleague Carolyn Bennett's words I think are very appropriate logic.

I would like to move a motion, however the clerk would like to phrase it, that lowers the privacy commissioner's estimates by \$1,000.

**The Chair:** How should the motion be worded? Would it be worded by replacing the amount, or would it be worded by omitting to say less the amount of—

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett:** No, just like here: "Interim Supply, be adopted, reduced by \$1,000...or negated."

**Mr. Ken Epp:** It is all worded for you.

**The Chair:** Reduced by \$1,000 to \$9,816,000.

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** You don't have to do the math. You just have to subtract the part in brackets.

**The Chair:** I've got you. That's done.

**The Clerk of the Committee:** Less the amount for interim supply.

**The Chair:** We have an amendment moved by Mr. Bryden, seconded by Dr. Bennett.

JUSTICE

Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Canada

Vote 45—Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada Program—Program expenditures.....\$9,817,000, less the amount of \$2,454,250 voted in Interim Supply.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Vote 45 as amended agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** The final question: Shall I report these votes, as amended?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Agreed and so ordered. Thank you very much.

For the information of members of the committee, we will meet on Tuesday. We have agreed to call the information commissioner to talk about his report. That will be Tuesday. We will have a steering committee meeting early in the week, which I shall call. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.





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