



House of Commons  
CANADA

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

---

OGGO • NUMBER 029 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 28, 2006**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Diane Marleau**

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Tuesday, November 28, 2006

•(1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.)):** The members of the committee will recall that when Madam Barrados came before us earlier on this fall, many felt that they hadn't had much of a chance to prepare for her coming to the committee, so we asked her to return to us. She has further wise words to direct towards us, so I will ask Madam Barrados to please begin.

It's your turn.

[Translation]

**Ms. Maria Barrados (President, Public Service Commission of Canada):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is my pleasure to appear before your Committee to discuss further our Annual Report and the three audits we tabled on October 3. I have with me today Linda Gobeil, Senior Vice-President of the Policy Branch, and Donald Lemaire, Vice-President of the Staffing and Assessment Services Branch.

I would like to begin by making some introductory comments on areas of particular interest from our last meeting. The PSC is a key player in ensuring that federal organizations remain accountable to Parliament, and to Canadians, for the appropriate exercise of their staffing authorities. We have been entrusted by Parliament to protect merit and non-partisanship in the management of human resources, independently from Ministerial direction.

In the spring, we released a study on priority appointments of ministerial staff into the public service. Bill C-2 does away with this priority, but does not deal with movement from the public service into ministers' offices. As we discussed in October, we had investigated and revoked two appointments, of public servants who had worked as exempt staff, that had been made inappropriately. We now plan to examine in greater detail through statistical analysis, audit and potentially investigation, the issue of movement of public servants into ministers' offices and back into the public service. We will report the results of our work to Parliament. Our intent is to determine whether there are more irregularities than already reported. Our examination will go back as far as records allow, to the early 1990s.

We are also planning to address representativeness. Closing the gap between the workforce availability of employment equity group members and their representation in the public service continues to be a concern. The PSC is urging departments and agencies to address this gap in their long-term human resources plans. Different means are available. We have demonstrated the effectiveness of pre-

qualified pools of employment equity candidates. Last year, we pre-qualified 41 members of visible minorities for entry into the Executive group. To date, 22 have been appointed.

We are also conducting a “drop-off” study to discover why there is such a gap between the application and appointment rates of members of employment equity groups, particularly of visible minorities. In our recently completed study that examined external recruitment over a five-year period from 2000 to 2005, we found that 25.7% of the applications were from visible minorities, while 10.5% were appointed — above the workforce availability for the jobs in the study, demonstrating a strong interest in working with the public service, and a potential to close the gap in representativity in the public service. We will continue to examine this issue in greater depth.

[English]

With the coming into force of the new PSEA, the PSC's priorities changed. We need to play a stronger oversight role in a delegated staffing system. We are conducting more audits and need to increase our capacity by training and developing auditors.

We were given new responsibilities in overseeing the political activities of public servants. Employees have to seek PSC approval to run for election. The responsibility for municipal elections added under the new act has had a significant impact on our workload. Since January 1, 2006, we have received 76 requests for approval to be a candidate, of which 67 were for municipal elections.

We are changing the area of selection policy to broaden access to public service jobs. We implemented the public service resourcing system to help departments screen the larger volumes of applicants that resulted. We have taken the approach of phasing in the use of national area of selection so that by December 2007 all Canadians will have access to most public service jobs open to the public.

Even with full delegation under the new PSEA, we have found that we are continuing to receive a substantial volume of requests for our services. Many departments and agencies lack the human resource capacity and expertise necessary to staff under the new regime. We are committed to supporting the implementation of the new PSEA.

We have realigned our own priorities and reallocated our human and financial resources internally. We have now reached the point at which we cannot do much more reallocation without dropping activities. We have made every effort, including implementing zero-based budgeting. We received a clean opinion on our financial statements from the Auditor General. We are now working with the Treasury Board on a funding solution to meet the steady demand for our services and our new responsibilities under the new PSEA.

I will now turn to the subject of a strengthened link to Parliament. In both the House and the Senate, the PSC proposed amendments to Bill C-2 that would reinforce our independence and strengthen our link to Parliament. Many of these proposals were considered outside the scope of the bill. We will continue to raise these issues in the required five-year review of the PSEA, which will also provide an opportunity for Parliament to examine how well we have done and what types of changes need to be made.

Finally, I appreciate any comments you might provide on how we can improve our accountability to Parliament in our reporting or with respect to the issues we examine. We are dealing with a large, complex system, and we need to be sure that we meet our objective of ensuring merit and non-partisanship in the public service.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Madam Chair, thank you for the invitation to appear before your Committee. I would be pleased to answer your questions.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming before the committee.

We'll start with the Liberals, and the first one is Mr. Bains.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.):** My question is a continuation of a discussion we had with PCO officials who appeared before the committee, and one of the areas we discussed when they were presenting the supplementary estimates was with respect to an aging population, specifically with respect to a void that would exist in the public service sector when the baby boomers retire, in terms of senior executive positions as well as middle-level positions.

They indicated to us in their discussions at that time that PCO was taking on a leadership role and was working with the deputy ministers and working with civil servants to come up with a strategic plan to address that issue. They had, I believe, a plan in place with the private sector, some sort of exchange program they were talking about.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could elaborate on that, if you are aware of such plans, such initiatives—how to address this issue on a going-forward basis, and specifically, what initiatives or partnerships exist with the private sector.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you for the question.

The way our system is set up, the Public Service Commission is the organization that has the appointment authorities. We are set up to be independent of ministerial directions, which means I am not closely involved with the work of the departments and agencies when it comes to those things that are directed from ministers, as how they might do things.

In the case of the work that is being done now, we have a division whereby the Public Service Commission does the staffing and the appointments, and the government—PCO—does the planning. The plans are set in terms of what the needs are. The Public Service Commission is responsible for making sure the frameworks and the policies and the mechanisms are in place to fill those needs and to do these properly.

To date, I've had only brief conversations with people at PCO about where they're going. Many of the preoccupations they have are the same as mine, in that we need to recruit, and to recruit the right people, for the openings we have coming up.

But I can't really elaborate any more on their plans. I don't know any more than what I've read in the newspaper about their work with the private sector, although I am of the opinion that it is always useful to get as much input from as many people as you can, because they can always inform what you do.

• (1120)

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** I appreciate that.

In line with that, the question I have now is with respect to recruitment and assessment. In your total spending—you spend about \$112 million, I think the supplementary estimates indicated—approximately \$64 million is set aside for recruitment and assessment.

In your opinion, is that sufficient? Obviously there has been an increase year over year, over the \$88 million that was set aside previously. Now that you've taken a substantial increase, do you feel it is sufficient for recruitment and assessment, in light of some of the challenges I just suggested—especially on a going forward basis, when there'll be a set of retirements, an attrition that will take place? And how do you deal with that on a going forward basis?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** There is one area in the recruitment and assessment area where I feel some real pressures. This is on the assessment side, on the French language testing side. We realize we have to redo our tests. They're 25 years old, and it is time to renew them, and we need to give better feedback to people. That is an area where I have some real pressure.

The other area, though, in my organization where the pressure is very high is on the new activities I have for political activity and for the oversight requirements that I have. I can reallocate resources, but I don't want to take resources away from recruitment into those oversight areas. I'm now in a position where I feel I will have to either drop some services or get some new resources, and we are having those discussions with the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** One of the issues you've presented in your opening remarks with respect to the gap of representativeness—one of the areas we discussed last time you were in committee, as well—is with respect to the inequity that exists, or the lack of representation of visible minorities and women and so on.

You have indicated in your opening remarks that you're conducting a drop-off study to discover why there's a gap between the application and the appointment rates, specifically with visible minorities. Do you have a timeline associated with this report?

My question, which we discussed last time as well, is this. We set these goals and targets, and time and time again we don't meet the targets. What accountability measures are there in place to hold people accountable for reaching these targets, and will this report examine that as well?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** As far as the timeline on the report is concerned, we have the report completed now. It's in the process of being translated. The full report will be released as soon as we have it translated.

I feel that's the first step, because what this report did was demonstrate what the statistical amounts were. We could see that the drop-off occurred between applications and actual appointments. But the other part of this report is a little more encouraging. For those jobs that were being examined, the appointment rate was higher than what you would estimate you would get if you just did it on labour force availability.

We have to do two things. We have to look much more closely at why we're getting this drop-off, because there is a very high interest in working in the public service. The second thing we have to do is come up with a better estimate for the rate at which we expect appointments of visible minorities in order to close the gap. In a way, we now have high turnover. We're seeing more movement and we're seeing more turnover. This is also an opportunity to try to get these things right.

We have to do those things right away, and we're starting the work on them. We'll try to get those things into our next annual report.

On the question of how you hold people more accountable, these forums are very effective accountability forums. As well, in our reports we regularly monitor and examine, we give feedback to individual deputies, and we show examples. We are working on these things to move the system more rapidly. We have to say that progress is being made, but it's not happening fast enough.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Do you believe this is the most appropriate way of holding them accountable? Are there any suggestions that you have and could propose to further strengthen accountability? Obviously this is one good example of how we can hold them accountable, but I feel this is not sufficient enough. Can you give examples, from your experience, of how we can further strengthen

accountability so that people meet their targets and, in certain instances, even exceed them?

● (1125)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We've taken a number of initiatives to encourage people to do more. I am of the school where it's encouragement and transparency. One of the things we have to do is have greater transparency in the reporting of the results. I'm pushing that very hard myself, but I think that in all the accountability exercises there should be an expectation that you have the numbers. People from departments should be prepared to discuss those numbers when they come. That kind of question is interesting on the part of members, and I will continue to be interested in it and report it.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Do have time remaining?

**The Chair:** You got your eight minutes.

Madame Thibault.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wish to thank Ms. Barrados, Ms. Gobeil and Mr. Lemaire for joining us once again. We much appreciate your presence here.

Ms. Barrados, as you well know, it is not my intention to try to catch you off guard. In the highlights contained in a document that was provided to us in October 2006, it is stated that there was a majority of organizations that were ready to assume delegated authority. In your opening statement, you give us a bit of a warning. You are honest and you say that: "Many departments and agencies lack the human resources capacity and expertise necessary to staff under the new regime."

You say "many", without indicating whether there are 14 or 22 of them. Could you give me an order of magnitude? Is this something you mention because it continues to worry you?

Secondly, when all of the implementation efforts were made, my impression — and please correct me if I am wrong — was that with delegation of authority there would also be the necessary resourcing. The latter is perhaps in the right balance, but perhaps it was taken away from you through a reduction of your budget, given that there was no delegation in this area.

Do these departments and agencies have the necessary funding? Was this situation to be expected? If not, is it due to other factors? This could cause recruitment problems. I have been told by several union representatives that in the area of human resources this or that department did not have the necessary resourcing to take care of payroll or other things.

You also say that you are working with Treasury Board in order to find a funding solution. You will understand that that ties in with my previous question. Is this because you were too generous with the transfer of funds? I am not saying this to be cynical, but jokingly.

I will limit myself to those questions for now. I will then have further questions regarding one of my favourite subjects, namely official languages.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you very much. I will try to answer, and Linda may have something to add.

Let us first deal with the matter of our concerns with regard to the delegation of staffing authority: in other words, were the departments truly ready to be given these powers? We proceeded to define a certain number of essential elements. It is not ideal, but these are essential elements. We for example reviewed the policy in place, offered training, provided communication, and they undertook an oversight role and launched a planning process. Obviously, in order for the system to be complete, all of these elements are required.

We decided that the system was at a stage where delegation was possible. You have to begin somewhere, but we still have concerns with regard to human resource management planning. We have concerns with regard to the oversight capability as well as the computer systems. One must have the necessary systems and means to supervise these things.

In our view, this is the first step. We have the framework, we have the legislation, it is a wonderful accomplishment, but we must do much more in order to truly get the system working.

We also have questions with regard to the resources required. Do departments have sufficient funding? I am convinced that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada does not have all of the needed capability. Is it really a matter of funding? I am not so convinced, because we detected a problem with regard to staff renewal within the Agency. A lot of people have retired, a lot of new people have thus inherited their responsibilities, and the number of people in human resources has remained the same: there has been no drop.

We must deal with the situation by first considering the response capability, the training and the appointment of people presenting the necessary skills, before asking questions about resources. I continue to have concerns with regard to the lack of investment in the computer systems that are needed. Was it planned for? It is difficult to say. We at the PSC have always had concerns as to our capability regarding the system and the computer side of things.

With regard to funding, were we too generous with the first allotments? I believe that we behaved responsibly because with the new act, there is a change in responsibilities and it is my belief that we did a fair reallocation in accordance with this change of responsibilities.

Linda, would you like to add anything?

• (1130)

**Ms. Linda Gobeil (Senior Vice-President, Policy Branch, Public Service Commission of Canada):** Further to what has been said, we are indeed still in a transition period. There is a new act in place, as you know.

The departments are, however, very much aware of our concerns. We have mentioned three in the area of human resource planning and, if they forget, we are here to remind them and this is what we do on a regular basis.

We have observed the same thing with regard to the Human Resources Group, in other words a deficiency. Some initiatives have, as a matter of fact, already been launched. We mentioned this

financial resource problem earlier and we are wondering if what is lacking is not perhaps rather access to these people. We are already starting to see results. We are crossing our fingers and we continue to hope that all of this will remain promising.

With regard to the systems, we still have problems in that area. All of that to say that the departments are well aware of the situation and the problems. We are here to remind them about what they have to do. We will have to see in the future to what extent these concerns will remain.

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Do I still have a bit of time? One minute? I will take 30 seconds, so that you have 30 seconds to respond on the matter of human resources planning.

The lack of planning never ceases to surprise me, and I believe it surprises a lot of people. Sometimes, one is unable to do anything about it because one has simply inherited some new situation; it simply lands on your lap, etc. But in this case, have you seen improvements over the course of the last year? Are departments better planning their human resource needs?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We have undertaken an analysis of the system and of the progress accomplished. There has indeed been some progress. More efforts have been made and, in some cases, planning has improved. I am however unable to give you an overall picture at this point in time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Kramp.

[English]

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Thank you, Madame Chair.

And welcome, again.

There are two or three areas I'd like to explore. To use your words, I want to slip to the phantom positions just for a second—not to dwell on it, but just to be reassured. You've categorized it as irregularities. And the movement to and from ministers' offices that apparently took place—none of us want to see interference in any particular manner.

Could you elaborate? You mentioned you wanted to get a handle on this, and that we were going to have further examination. Obviously it's within the purview of this committee to potentially call ministers, department heads, whoever was directly involved with a possible shortchanging of the accountability and ethics of what we should be doing. Could you give us an update on the status of your investigation and where you see it going—timelines—and perhaps the depth of the investigation process you see your department carrying out?

• (1135)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We are pursuing this because of the interest expressed at this committee, and also the interest expressed on the part of the President of the Treasury Board.

The last time I was here, I was asked if I had seen any of these other irregularities. In that short term, for some of the things we looked at, we had not seen anything that really struck us. But following the question, we decided the wise thing to do was to go back much further, so that's what we are intending to do.

The first step of what we have to do is look at the statistics, and our source of information is the pay records, because we can trace from the pay records whether somebody worked as exempt staff and went into the public service, and went from the public service to the exempt staff. We can identify those patterns.

I have to remember we're talking over a fairly long period of time. We're talking about a number of people who were in exempt staff positions, a fair number who moved back and forth. That's not to say all of these are a problem, because there is a value and there is a role in our system for public servants to be working as exempt staff and then coming back into the public service. We have always been worried that this was not monitored and not regulated.

Our first step is to look at the numbers—our databases—and identify those patterns we feel look irregular, or look odd. What I mean by that is that a movement in and out for a short term is not one that gives me a particular concern. Lots of movement back and forth begins to look a little worrisome. Movements across long periods of time, one exempt staff...it's the different patterns we're going to isolate. That work has started, we are doing that now. I need to know how many of these positions I see are at risk.

The other thing we intend to do is go back as far as our records possibly can, so we will go back to 1990. If we can go back further, we will. We want to make sure we get a good period of time and get a number of transitions, because most of this activity occurs over transition, so we want a number of transitions. We expect to have that information, that first analysis of what numbers we're talking about, in January, so we would have a handle on what numbers we're dealing with.

Then what we propose to do is throw that into full audit mode. The auditors would identify individual cases that might present problems, like the two we had reported in the last annual report, and investigate those—those individual investigations.

That's our approach. Our first step is in January, and by the time I see the size of what I am dealing with, then I'll be in a better position to say how long the rest of it would take.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** In your brief examination to this point, have you found other incidents beyond the two that just jumped out?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No, I haven't.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Okay, thank you very much.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** But we are just looking at the statistical patterns. Take no assurance one way or the other from that, please.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** I know a number of my colleagues on the committee will probably have further questions on this. I'd like to look to another matter for a second.

We're going through quite an analysis on accrual accounting and the demand that's going to place on the public service. We recognize that you could potentially be running into a shortfall of people in the

auditing section if we were to adapt to that, which makes me think a bit more of a broader public concern.

Does your department have any data available on comparisons with other jurisdictions, on a per capita basis, of public servants employed, be it federal-provincial, be it other jurisdictions? As an example, when we were comparing the auditing capacities, we compared with other countries. We compared with England, New Zealand, Australia. Per capita, what do they do staff-wise?

As an example, Switzerland has a flat tax regime, so obviously their revenue people would probably be in the hundreds, where ours might be in the tens of thousands in staffing requirements. Could you give us a bit of an overview on any comparisons that your department has done with other jurisdictions?

• (1140)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I have a couple of comments in leading up to your question. The issue is not so much with the accrual accounting but is with the accrual budgeting. We basically have the accrual accounting, but we don't have the accrual budgeting side of it.

With the government, we have done a lot of recruitment in the financial area. It's called the FORD program and we've actually done very well bringing people into that program. Where our issues are is that as we get new requirements—we now have more requirements for internal audits. I have requirements on the audit side and I'm sure the AG does as well—we have to work up our recruitment there. They're usually not trained in the same way, so you need to get those expertise and train them. We're gearing up to doing that. I think we can do that.

On your issue of comparisons with other public services, that's a very interesting question, and actually I've had the same preoccupation. We will be doing some benchmarking with the Australians, who in many ways are like us. You have to try to benchmark with people who have a lot more in common with you in terms of your system, federal—for them it's commonwealth state, federal-provincial, roughly the same size. Their approach is a little different in terms of centralization and decentralization.

We're interested in doing that and we have that work under way. Unfortunately, I don't have any specific results, but if you have specific questions, we can—

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Do you have a timeline? It would be most interesting to have that cost analysis comparison.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The cost for what, exactly?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** The comparisons between the two systems on a per capita basis.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Of...?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** With, say, Australia. What is broken down departmentally—

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Costs for staffing and things like that?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Yes.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I'll get back to you on how far we are on that.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dewar.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** I just have a couple of questions to follow up.

I want to start with employment equity. I have a question about the gathering of statistics. Having gone over the document and looked at your aggregate data, I just want to be assured that when we're talking about visible minorities, we're talking, in some cases, about women as visible minorities. I have a question about how they are counted. I'm assuming that if a woman is a visible minority, she would obviously be included in one category, as among women, and in another, as well, as among visible minorities. Is that the case? Okay.

When we look at the data and reports and juxtapose 2004-05 with 2005-06, we clearly see that work needs to be done in the area of visible minorities and the success rate, no question about that. I guess my question is, how do you see this improving, in your opinion? What should government be doing?

I know there has been a lot of discussion in this town. In Ottawa alone we have new Canadians and visible minorities who have more post-secondary education than the mean. We have people, in other words, who are highly qualified but who just can't punch through that glass ceiling. So there is obviously a policy question there.

But I'm hearing from people that this was delegated most recently to deputy ministers to deal with. I'm just wondering if that's a problem. If we have this delegation occurring, and it's not rendering the results needed, should we be looking at something else? That's my first question.

The second question is about the issue of the flow between the public service and ministers' offices. We've talked a little bit about that. I know some commentators—I'm thinking of Mr. Savoie—have suggested this just be banned outright over a certain threshold. I know you don't agree with that. Clearly there needs to be tracking, and I'm delighted to see these data are being gathered. After all, there are certain people who were involved previously—Mr. Guité is one who stands out—who were brought into jobs from the public service, and no one was really monitoring that movement. So I think it's long overdue, and I'm glad to see you're doing that.

You're going to be gathering the data, but right now, from what we know, are there some interim measures that should be taken, in your belief? Maybe they should not be as draconian as Mr. Savoie is suggesting, but at least some monitoring to say.... For example, when a public servant decides to put their name forward in a municipal or provincial election, there should be some process to monitor this. It's certainly been identified as a problem, both by you and others, and if there is a problem, then should we not be doing something about it?

Those are my first two questions.

• (1145)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you for that.

In terms of whether the delegation system is the way to go, whether it is appropriate, I think you can ask a lot of questions about the appropriateness of delegation. We went through a big change in the legislation with the Public Service Modernization Act and changes to the Public Service Employment Act, and we went for a delegated model. We're one year into that model. I think we have to give it a go. We have to try to make this work before we start tinkering with it.

An important part of the delegated model, the way we have structured it—and I believe there is only one country that comes close to how we've done it—is that we have given the authority to appoint and revoke to the Public Service Commission. We delegate. The legislation encourages delegation. But the Public Service Commission can remove the delegation. So if the performance isn't good or there are really big problems, we can remove the delegations or condition the delegations, and we do that. Every time we do that we report on it.

I think we have to keep at it, but we have to watch it very closely, and that's why I have a preoccupation about having the monitoring and the audit capacities in this delegated system.

In terms of the question about the flow between public servants and ministers' offices, this is a worry. It has been an ongoing worry for me. If you look at a province like Ontario, they have a much clearer approach. Their approach is that their public service commission gives permission, so there has to be a request for permission. They monitor and they have a policy framework around it that is very strict. So it says if you're an executive, you cannot work in a minister's office as exempt staff for more than six months, so to help short term in the transition. Otherwise it is two years. You're allowed two years and that's it—one time for two years and no more.

I have suggested that we go that way in terms of a policy solution. There's been some reluctance on that. I haven't really had any uptake on that, but we certainly will continue to monitor it within the ambit of what we can do, because there are limits as to what we can do at the Public Service Commission. But in the ambit of what I can do within the statute, we will continue to watch this and report on it.

**The Chair:** You still have two minutes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Great. I have two other questions.

One is on the use of consultants in the public service. I'm very concerned about how consultants are being used in the public service. It is recent, but it also goes back the last three or four years, at least since I've been talking to public servants about it.



The fact of the matter is that we are having consultants being brought in who don't fit into the accountability framework that most of us are used to. So these are different and separate from being brought in as exempt staff from the public service or people from minister's staff who then are dropped into the public service. I'm talking about people who are consultants. Has this been a concern of yours? Is it something you're looking at?

Secondly, the government most recently announced that they've put together a team formed with people like Mr. Tessier and others to talk about how to improve the public service and also to look to the future to recruitment and other issues. I have a lot of concerns about this, in that none of the nine people presently are working in the public service, and I'm very concerned about the gap left vis-à-vis their mandate and how it connects to the present-day public service.

If you look at the last government, one of the problems we had with the previous government, my party at least, was that public servants weren't being consulted. They were being told how to do things without being asked what the problems were and what the solutions were. I'm concerned we're seeing the same thing with both consultants being brought in and, secondly, a nine-person panel being brought in that does not have the connective tissue to the present public service.

I would like your comments on those two points.

• (1150)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you for that.

First on the subject of contractors, we deal with employees; our domain is staffing and employees. When there's a contractor and there's a contract, it should not have an employer-employee relationship. If it has, then you have a contracting problem. You contract for a piece of work—and I think there's a role for that kind of thing—but you're not expecting it to be substituting for an employee, because there are all kinds of obligations that come with being an employee, and rights and protections.

I can't really comment on that further, but certainly as an organization we are concerned about people who are not full-time public servants, with how they are used—and casual people. If they're really casual, it's not a problem, but if they're used in other ways, it becomes a problem. Similarly, something like executive interchange has a lot of value, but you don't want it to substitute for an employee, and if it does, and if you do delegations, then they have to be properly trained.

I can't offer much more, because it gets outside of my ambit.

With respect to the team of advisers on the public service that has been set up, I really had no input into the composition of that team. I think the question of why that team was put together that way is probably something that more appropriately goes to the Clerk of the Privy Council.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Certainly. I'm sorry to interrupt, but you haven't been consulted by them to date? That's fair enough—they've just announced it—but they haven't contacted you, or the government hasn't, about this whole process or procedure and what they're attempting to do?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No.

**The Chair:** Mr. Alghabra.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, Ms. Barrados. It's good to see you again.

I want to ask you a question. You can tell there's interest in trying to understand the gap of representation. We had that issue raised the last couple of times you visited this committee, and obviously we continue to try to understand the situation. In your opening remarks, you highlighted the fact that the commission pre-qualified 41 visible minority candidates for entry into the executive group. Do you know how many in total the commission pre-qualified for the executive group?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I'm turning to Donald Lemaire, if he can help me on this.

It tends not to run that way, and he may want to elaborate on this a bit. The way the system works, by and large, is on an individual position basis. There's a poster for a position, or there is a decision about filling a position, and you fill the single position.

There are some other programs and initiatives that do groups of people. They deal with groups, but that's the exception rather than the norm.

In this particular case, because we felt there was a problem with the number of visible minorities in the executive group, what we did was say, we'll identify a group for you and tell you they're executive-ready, and then you can just appoint them. You don't have to go through any competitions; you don't have to do anything. You just match skills and needs.

That's the reason for that particular example. In your broader question, I think I know where you're going. You're asking, what proportion are they? I don't think I can answer, because the system doesn't work that way.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** I just want to understand this pre-qualification, then. Are you saying that this is an exception, that you did this on purpose to ensure that visible minority candidates were readily available for departments looking to hire executives?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** That's right.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** So you don't normally do pre-qualification?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** You do in some cases, but it's not the standard procedure. The standard procedure is by position.

Donald, do you want to add to that?

**Mr. Donald Lemaire (Vice-President, Services Branch, Public Service Commission of Canada):** I don't have more information specifically about that, but what we're starting to do now with departments is in post-secondary recruitment. For example, Foreign Affairs has done campaigns targeted to EE groups—employment equity groups. We're starting to have a more targeted approach towards different career choices. For example, it was done for the political and economic foreign service officers. They did it also for trade officers.

That's what we're trying to promote with departments for their use, but it's their call. We're only there to assist them with those campaigns.

• (1155)

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** So are all of your pre-qualifications done to the EE groups? Is that usually what you do then?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We did this as an example, because you know the arguments. First is that they don't have any available. I remember this in the discussion about women and about French language skills, that we don't have any. This is a demonstration that we have them, and they're—

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** I'm sorry, but I'm trying to understand. You did this on purpose. You don't normally pre-qualify individuals. You did this on purpose to highlight the fact that we have a qualified, readily available visible minority candidate?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I don't want to be evasive, but we have an old piece of legislation and a new piece of legislation. In the new piece of legislation, departments are empowered to do this themselves. We did this under the old legislation to demonstrate how it could be done, and yes, we did it on purpose. We did it on purpose to demonstrate that the people were there and they were executive-ready.

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** Thank you.

The other thing I want to talk to you about, which is relevant to this, is that you talked about the two major activities within the commission: the appointment integrity and political neutrality, and the recruitment and assessment services.

I wonder if there's an opportunity to create a responsibility or a position within the recruitment and assessment services for somebody to examine or pay attention to the equity issue. As we know from our daily lives, each department, each individual has a lot of responsibilities, and sometimes the equity issue may not be an essential pursuit of their job requirement. If there's an individual, or if there's a position for someone to encourage departments, procedures, and raise awareness about this challenge....

I think it's highly important in the public service, more than in any other sector in our society, to have an adequate representation of visible minorities, of bilingualism, of women, and aboriginals. That's why it's really important that if there's a chance to highlight and raise the level of awareness, this responsibility within the public service would be useful.

I don't know if you would comment on having increased attention to such a mandate.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I agree with what you're proposing. What we really have to have is a public service that is reflective of the society that it's serving, and I think that's also very important. In fact we do have a separate group that deals with employment equity issues. They're the ones who are producing the analysis, and they are also the conscience, if you'd like, of the whole organization.

So I want to make sure that we have concerns with employment equity and bilingualism as well, that we have those concerns in all our work, so you see it in the audits and certainly on the service side. As Mr. Lemaire was saying, they are setting up special parts of programs, so that when you recruit post-secondary students, you

have an employment equity stream. So as we're pushing for greater representativeness, people in departments will easily be able to go to these programs, where they're identified, and where they have expressed an interest and have met a certain number of the qualifications to enter into the public service.

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** Are you saying there's a plan to move in that direction, or are you just describing your ideal scenario to us?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No, we have it.

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** We have the—

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We have it. We have the person sitting just behind me. She's there.

I haven't quite gotten the full plan that I want to see in terms of how this group, which we keep allocating resources for and we're maintaining.... We want the analytic capacity—so we come up with those numbers and a better understanding of why we're getting this drop-off phenomenon—and that they also sort of serve as the conscience to the organization, saying, recruitment and assessment, what are you doing? On the assessment side, we have to be very concerned that we don't have bias in any of the assessments, that cultural language biases don't creep in.

• (1200)

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Thank you.

You said that due to irregularities you've discovered through the hiring of exempt political staff into the public service, you are conducting a sweeping investigation of the last 10 years. Is that accurate?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** My investigation will go back as far as my records will take me, and it will go to at least 1990.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Okay, so due to the phantom jobs and the irregularities we saw with the previous government regarding political staff getting special employment treatment in the public service, you believe there is cause for an investigation going back that far.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The way we work is to look at specific appointments and we make the corrections. These two cases came to us as cases asking about a priority system. They came to our attention, we investigated them, we corrected them, and we did the revocations. And I made recommendations about how the system could better deal with this, because it is totally unmonitored; it's a total policy vacuum. I made several recommendations, first to the Treasury Board and then in the context of Bill C-2.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Were your recommendations followed in Bill C-2?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No. That really was not because there wasn't an interest in the recommendations, but it was because they were considered outside the scope of the legislation. That's the route I had taken. I had said there's a vacuum here, let's put the framework in place to deal with this.

Subsequent to that, the committee here and the President of the Treasury Board expressed a lot of interest in how much more of this there was. I can't answer that question without doing the analysis. That's why we're doing the analysis, to see how much there is, but I want to look at several government transitions. That's why I'm pushing back as far as my data will take me.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** That's good. I encourage you in your work.

On the issue of language testing in the public service, it's no secret that anglophones taking the French oral exam have failed in spectacularly high numbers over the years. You've acknowledged that there is a problem there. You have announced that you are changing the testing regimen to make it more user friendly and to ensure that it is a better reflection of the linguistic capability of the subject. When are those changes expected to be implemented?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I'll get Donald to talk to you about the specific dates we have in mind.

We have done a number of things on the language testing already. The real issue is that you have adults who have not had any language training take language training and then be put into a test environment—and they haven't taken many tests, so some of them are very ill at ease about that.

We've taken a number of steps to try to make the testing environment easier to face, giving more examples of what the standards look like in whichever language they're dealing with, and trying to get testers matched up with the public servants in terms of the areas they work in. And we're exploring pilots to have alternate ways of testing. This means following people, or making a presentation, having a dialogue, appearing before a committee perhaps, and doing it in the other official language.

The problem is that we have, on average, about 22,000 tests a year...20,000 to 25,000 of each of the written and the reading, and of the oral expression. We have a very high volume so we have to try to get something standardized. With all our efforts, we have actually seen some improvement in the oral interaction.

Donald, can you tell us what the timelines are for the changes in the test?

• (1205)

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** Yes. We're in the development phase of the test and we expect to pilot the test for roll-out in April 2007-08. As the president mentioned, it's over 20,000 tests, so it takes a bit of time to implement and also to properly test before we move to a full roll-out.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** For implementation in 2008-09?

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** No, in 2007-08. We'll be starting to implement rollout in 2007-08.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** What does "rollout" mean? Does rollout mean the pilot testing or the implementation?

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** The pilot testing should be done in the fall of 2007.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** And full implementation by the end of 2008? Is that reasonable?

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** Yes. We hope it will be fully implemented, but we never know what difficulties or operational—

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Okay, fair enough.

Speaking not on behalf of the government but as a member of Parliament in the Ottawa area, I can tell you this is a big problem. I hear frustration from public servants all the time about this. At some point, given the demographic changes that are occurring in our workforce and the recruitment needs that our public service is going to face, we are going to have to find a way to make this system less cumbersome if we're going to recruit a skilled workforce into the middle and upper levels of the public service that we're going to need.

Some people might consider that to be politically incorrect. It's a numerical reality. I hear it from all sorts of people, from all parts of the national capital region. I was even approached by a member of one of the public sector unions who is a francophone, who was talking about his frustration of seeing this system and its encumbrances imposed upon some of his co-workers. There has to be a way to improve the way this testing works so that we can get people into the right positions, at the same time as guaranteeing that the public will always have service in the official language of its choice—either official language. I think we can do better.

The private sector does this all the time. Any national corporation with customers in and outside of Quebec has to manage the same problems. They have to provide services to a unilingual francophone market and a unilingual anglophone market at the same. So there has to be a way we can do this efficiently.

I very much encourage you to pursue any innovative techniques to move forward, because I am convinced we can do a lot better than we're doing. What are your comments on that?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I'd like to make just a couple of comments.

We have a piece of legislation, the official languages legislation, and there are two obligations. One is the obligation to provide service in both official languages, but the second obligation is to provide supervision in both official languages. That is not the kind of obligation that the private sector takes upon itself, and that is because a commitment was made to attempt to get a fully bilingual public service.

Those who take that charge on look at the public service and say, well, you know, you're training a lot of people; they get trained, they pass their test, sometimes with a lot of difficulty, and then they don't use the other language. So they lose the skills because we don't have that public service as fully bilingual as we want.

That's the vision. For us at the Public Service Commission, this is the vision that is in the Official Languages Act and it's in the preamble of the PSEA, so that's the vision that we are working to. So it is different from what the private sector has to face.

I know there is a lot of criticism of the test, and I have to accept some of those criticisms. We're not perfect. The test is out of date. We have to improve the test. We're doing that even without new money. I'm going to do it. It means other things will suffer, but I'm going to do it. I'm making this a priority; we're going to do this test.

But frankly, the test is not always the problem. There are a number of people who, as I say, have high anxiety for test situations. Some of them just freeze, and some people have some horrible times with a second language. But a lot of them just don't have the skill. I hear a lot of complaints about the C-B-C level, that for those very same people who have the C, I get told I can't send them somewhere to make a presentation or do something with that C level.

So it's a little more complicated than saying it's just the test, but I am committed to changing and doing the best we can by the test.

•(1210)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bouchard.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

I would like, first of all, to know if the recruitment of casual workers falls under the Commission's mandate.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No, not exactly. Casual workers are not subject to the requirements of the act. These workers are not a concern, as long as they are called upon to carry out truly casual work. In certain cases, we talk about short-term work or short-term needs.

In the case of a large and complex system such as ours, this type of requirement will arise. However, the problem for me is the possibility that this serve as a door towards a permanent position within the public service. That has happened in the past, and it is a concern of mine.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I will move on to the next question, but if it is out of order, I will go to another one.

Casual workers employed by federal departments have told me that they have little chance of one day becoming regular employees.

Is it your impression that government departments and agencies resort to increasing the pool of casual workers so as to avoid having to hire regular employees?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Yes, this is a practice that I have observed and criticized in the annual report. When you resort to this type of hiring, you give an advantage to some without however offering to all Canadians interested in working in the public service a fair and transparent system.

At the PSC, we have seen that there is a very high level of interest in working in the public service. We receive a great number of job applications. For us, the matter is not that of a shortage. It is rather

what must be done to respond to the high demand on the part of people wishing to work for the public service and the way to manage this demand.

Linda, would you like to add something?

**Ms. Linda Gobeil:** With regard to casual workers, the possibility you mention exists. If these people are used in the proper way, in other words for periods of up to 90 days within the year, then all the better. It is a way of responding to immediate needs. If, however, people take advantage of this opportunity to circumvent all the requirements pertaining to entry into the public service, including the merit principle, then there is a problem, one that we have already brought up.

Furthermore, you were inferring that certain departments resort to this process so as to not fill positions permanently. This would require taking a look at what is really going on. The act is quite clear with regard to duration. Casual workers cannot be employed for more than 90 days per year. I am perhaps not aware of the cases you are alluding to. However, when casual work is used appropriately and managed according to the law, then it can be very profitable for everyone.

•(1215)

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I do not have sufficient proof to back up what I am saying, but I can tell you that I have been told of such goings on. People have told me that they had worked for three months and that, a few days before the end of the prescribed period, they were laid off, to then be hired back a week later. They have maintained that they are not alone in this situation, and that it is even common practice.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Linda and myself talked about casual jobs, but there are other categories as well. It is somewhat complicated. Perhaps Mr. Lemaire could give you an overview of the different situations that can exist.

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** Those positions that are qualified as determinate positions, and that can be viewed as casual, are given the status of indeterminate positions after three years. Some casual positions are limited to a duration of exactly 90 days. Once this period is up, they are not renewable. There must be a break in service.

Does your question relate to positions of a maximum duration of 90 days or to term positions?

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I have not really studied the matter in depth. I simply outlined the problem for you. Whatever the case, I now know that after three years, there is a provision that can apply.

**Mr. Donald Lemaire:** I would like to underscore that this is automatic in the case of term positions. However, in the case of casual positions, you are talking of very short term jobs, the duration of which is very precisely limited. They cannot be renewed with impunity.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Fine. I would like to ask another question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bouchard, your time is up.

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to each of the witnesses for appearing today.

In the report tabled, the 2005-06 report, in terms of the movement between the public service and ministers' offices, you indicate that there are approximately 100 public service employees who went to work in a minister's office without a break in service and then subsequently returned. And then you went on to highlight the fact that there were two situations where the potential for abuse was noted.

I'm just wondering, if you push this back now beyond the 10 years that your report indicates, do you expect the numbers per year to be roughly average, roughly 10 per year, or do you expect a bulge in that?

And then secondly, do you feel that you have the resources to complete your report, as you indicated, hopefully by January? I assume that each member of this committee would receive a report of your findings subsequent to that investigation.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The 10 years we were talking about was for the period 1993-94 to 2003-04, so we're pushing it back and we're pushing it forward. I expect it to be a bigger number, but I'm not sure how big.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Will it be bigger proportionately, though? This is roughly 10 per year. You don't expect a bulge because of a change of government.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We could have a bit of a bulge, because we'll be taking in two other transitions, and of course you have more of this in a transition period. So I don't know. If I guess, there will be 150, maybe, but not more than that. And then, of course, a lot of these will be fine. So we're going to have to sort out what doesn't look quite right.

Do I have the resources? I don't want to get into a whine. I am short of capacity on audit and investigation. But for me, what that means is that I reallocate and I change the priorities. Because of the interest, this has become a priority, and it means that some other things will be pushed back, so that's what I'll do.

The way I have described the work is that in January we will have what I call a description of the situation: how many of them there are, what kinds of things I have to do, where the limits are of what we can do as well. Because we can't go into crowns, and we obviously don't go into ministers' offices, but we can see the movement back and forth.

Yes, I'd be happy to provide a copy of that report to this committee.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I'd like to follow up. If I understand the system, let's say that out of the whole audit you end up with four suspicions. Would you have the authority to question ministers in terms of doing further investigations—or former ministers?

• (1220)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I have broad investigative powers, but they are with respect to people who are employed in the public service. Ministers are not employed in the public service. So I could try to

talk to them. They might want to talk to me and they might not, but I do not have those investigative powers for ministers.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** But part of your report could indicate whether you made that attempt, and then that could be included in your report back to this committee and we could pursue that further at that point.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Yes, that first scoping one in January would tell me what the situation is. In the subsequent one, I would describe all that. But remember, what I'm preoccupied with is the movement back and forth, so I should certainly be able to get a lot of information from people who are within the ambit of my work.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Okay. And we can expect an initial report possibly sometime in March or April, if your audit is done by the end of January.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It's the initial scope in terms of what the situation is. If I have two cases you can get it very fast. If I have a lot more cases it's going to take longer.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Before I go to Madame Thibault, I want to ask you one quick question. What's happening with the challenge of the applications and the geographic area where the job is located? That's been a preoccupation of mine for a long time.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** This is what we call the national area of selection. The Public Service Employment Act has a provision that allows the Public Service Commission, and anyone we delegate, to limit the geographic area where people can come from to apply for a certain job.

Members of Parliament, by and large, have been very upset about that. I've given up trying to defend it and have decided that we will change the system. We are doing this gradually, because we have high volume. People are very interested in getting work in the public service, particularly people outside of this area. So when we expand the geographic area, the volume we get increases dramatically. There are hundreds and hundreds of applications that we have to manage fairly.

It's very important to us that we get the tools for people in the system to use, because we want the system to be fair and transparent. We have started to incrementally provide the tools. Right now we have broadened the area of selection to national for all officer jobs in the national capital area. All executive jobs have been national for a number of years, but now all officer jobs in the national capital area are national. We are doing evaluations of this to see how it's going. We don't want work-arounds either; the system is good at doing that. We're putting the tools in place, making them available to people.

We have two pilots in the regions, because our intention is to expand the officer jobs to all the regions by April 2007. So all federal jobs, regardless of where they are, will be national. Then we'd like to move it more broadly to other support functions at the end of 2007, if we have all the systems in place and they're working properly.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Thibault.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Thank you very much, Madam. I am really surprised that it is once again my turn, but I am also very pleased.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Madam Barrados, for having talked about the language of work in response to a comment or a question from Mr. Poilievre. I believe that this is very important.

I understand Mr. Poilievre underscoring the importance of bilingual positions for service to the public, but bilingual positions are also essential in order for one to be able to work in his or her language, be it English or French. If anglophones and francophones who became bilingual talked with their staff or their colleagues alternately in English and in French — let us say half and half; I will not be too generous —, then people would make progress.

Repeat reappointments to positions in order to avoid a final and definitive appointment after three years still happen. What is your opinion of this?

Will the broadened area of selection with regard to official languages be beneficial or will it create an obstacle with regard to the language of work? Obviously, having a broadened zone means that francophones and anglophones both will be able to apply, on condition that they satisfy the requirements.

At the end of your report, on page 154, under “Human Resources Development Canada”, it is stated that of the 3,794 hiring activities, 1,057 were interim appointments. During your last presentation, you stated that in the case of senior executives, 38% of people appointed to interim positions had later on been granted the position.

These are interim positions. But if the people who fill them have any intelligence at all — which is the case of most of our civil servants —, they wind up getting these positions. This is quite an advantage. Given these numbers, we wonder if this situation exists for other job categories and if it should be a concern.

The numbers under the title “Human Resources Development Canada” are the following: 557 from outside, 808 promotions, 1,402 lateral appointments and 1,057... I do not know the number, but does this ring a bell? The number for Correctional Services Canada is of the same order of magnitude.

We all understand that these interim appointments are necessary for one reason or another. However, the creation of interim positions in order to avoid holding a competition, because one lacks the time and does not know how to plan, is inappropriate.

I would like to hear your comments in this regard and I thank you in advance.

● (1225)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I will call upon my two colleagues to help me provide good answers.

With regard to the broadening of the area of selection, will this become an obstacle? I hope not. The objective is to have a description of the job requirements, to have the tools — often times computer tools — and to do a fair and reasonable selection in a

transparent way. That is the ideal, but we must carry out an evaluation in order to ensure that this will work.

Let us deal now with the interim positions. We did an audit of executive interim positions. I do not know what the situation is everywhere, but my impression is that the workings are the same. We see that there is a lot of reorganization going on in various departments, such as Human Resources Development, for example. Departments are being split up or merged. Consequently, there are a lot of interim positions. This is difficult for people, because one is never sure of keeping his or her job, but, on the other hand, it often happens that the candidate selection process is not fair and transparent. This came out during our audit. The great majority of positions — close to 90% — are filled following a non-competitive process.

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Precisely, Madam. If the process is fair and equitable, those people who have interim positions might — which would not be surprising — obtain the position were there to be a competition. They would be given a distinct advantage. If all you do is meet Peter, Paul and Mary or a dozen or so people and then choose this one or that one, then I believe it is very unfair. An interim process is not that long.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It depends. We can hire employees in a truly interim fashion, as in the case of someone who replaces a person who is away for language training or who is pregnant, and who will be absent from work for three months, for example. However, our investigation was aimed at positions of a longer duration. This is not acceptable.

● (1230)

**The Chair:** Mr. Dewar, you now have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I turn to the concerns about savings within the public service. The 2005 budget was identified in your report and is known publicly. It was identified to exact about \$11 billion in savings.

Recently the government essentially shelved the report from outside consultants on how to save money in procurement. We've spent \$24 million on something we're not going to use. They looked toward the future in terms of the management of the system and the concerns that if we are going to be saving \$2.5 billion in procurement and \$11 billion generally in the public service, this is going to affect the system, particularly when you look at the capacity to do that. In other words, how are we going to make these savings on one hand and on the other hand not disrupt the public service provided to Canadians?

When you look at the skill sets of the people employed by the public service, when you've examined the priorities of the government, the concerns, the challenges ahead on the fiscal side, how are we doing in terms of meeting those demands with the kinds of people being hired? My main concern is not so much the people who are employed, but the method of the government, and I already highlighted my concerns about outsiders being brought in without consultation with the people working in the public service.

In your opinion—and this isn't something you've studied, but just your opinion—how are we going to be able to find efficiencies? What is the best way of doing that? We've seen the method used recently with A.T. Kearney, which was obviously not the way to go. We have \$11 billion from the previous government that we have to find in the next five years. What concerns do you have about that vis-à-vis the public service, and what do you think is the best way of finding efficiencies, if we need to find those savings? How do we go about finding those savings, or should we be looking to find those kinds of savings?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I can only make one comment, actually, about the attempts to find savings, in terms of our own involvement at the Public Service Commission. Our involvement is not that great, but in the effort to find savings, every department and agency was reviewed, and there was a discussion about what could be saved. That included the Public Service Commission.

At the end of the day, we were tasked with new responsibilities and not given any money. We had to find the savings to take on these new responsibilities—that was the management of an enlarged priority system, which everyone didn't want us to delegate, and we had talked about delegating it—which we did. We ended up with a reallocation of over \$4 million, I believe, as a result of it. But there was no money taken out of the Public Service Commission; it was all reallocation within.

In terms of how you find efficiencies, one of my priorities at the Public Service Commission is to try to have it become a model organization for how you manage well and properly in the Government of Canada. I can mention some of the things we are doing to try to identify efficiencies within our own organization.

We have been actively involved in benchmarking. We have, with some others, had consultants benchmark our activities with others in town and with private sector databases to see whether we could find savings. Were we more efficient? Were we more costly? In those areas where we found we were spending more than the average, we have undertaken further detailed reviews to identify and to bring it into line or explain why we have the difference.

The other thing we are doing is very aggressively budgeting, with a results focus, tying in human resource management. We're trying to bring these things together and are forcing reallocations. Areas that are less efficient are going to have money withdrawn and put into places where there is shortage. We've been going at that for the last couple of years and have reallocated over \$6 million.

My staff is getting tired of hearing me talk about other things I would like to see, such as time reporting, service standards, activity-based costing. We're working on these so that we can get a better handle on what the effort is and how we should do it.

But I'm speaking about our organization and what we're trying to do.

•(1235)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** You may have one more short comment.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I will just comment on casual employees. We had a huge increase in the number of casual employees hired in the last year. I guess this is more of a comment, and a request, looking

towards the next number of years, that we see an evaluation of this, particularly of concerns around merit and about recruiting new people and, again going back, the employment equity groups.

Perhaps there's a way in that pool of casual employees to bring people on and to nurture them, because there was a huge jump in casual employees. This is a request to keep an eye on that, as you do so well, and find ways to support those, particularly in the equity groups—well, in visible minorities—where we need to see more recruitment. Maybe there's a pool there to draw from.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It's on my list.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Thibault tells me that she would like to ask a short question.

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** We are all familiar with your past career accomplishments. The fact that you used to work for the Auditor General's Office is not foreign to my question.

You are aware that this Committee is studying the government's accountability system. Several witnesses have told us that a change in culture is necessary in this regard and that what is required here is that the leaders, the champions of this cause, take control of the situation. In their view, the enforcement of such an important piece will not be a walk in the park.

It is in the area of recruitment that there will be resistance. People will wonder if the necessary staff is available to take action immediately, even if the process is spread out over a shorter period, in terms of years.

Given the experience that you acquired in your previous role — and here it will be up to you to decide if you wish to respond — and in the context of the duties you have today and your mandate with regard to delegation and the capability of departments and agencies to respond, are you confident that the process to be put in place with regard to recruitment and training will settle in easily? I added in the final element, well aware that it is not your domain, but it is related to it.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Am I confident? Let us say that my perspective is a positive one. I believe that we must do this. We face many challenges and tremendous efforts will have to be made. Furthermore, deputy ministers will have to truly become involved. Luckily, that will also be the case for the Clerk. That is a very positive thing. Deputy ministers, for their part, have many other concerns. In my opinion, this should be one of the priorities.

As to my level of confidence, I am unable to respond at present. Perhaps I will be able to do so in one year's time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Barrados. We will be meeting with you again during the course of the new year.

[English]

I want the committee to know we're not sitting this Thursday. On December 5, the Auditor General will be coming before us to give an overview of the report she's tabling today. On December 7, we'll be working on our draft report.

If we're not quite finished with our report on December 7, we will have time to do more work on it the following week, but it would be

nice to have it finished on December 7 so we can deposit it before the end of this year.

**The Clerk of the Committee:** We hope to have the report to the members by December 5.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

---









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

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

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**