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CANADA

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

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, October 7, 2010**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable John McKay**



## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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• (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)):** Ladies and gentlemen, could I call this meeting to order, please?

It's meeting number 29 of the committee on government operations and estimates. On the orders of the day, we have Madam Barrados, from the Public Service Commission, and other committee business.

If I may for a moment ask the indulgence of the committee, I'll ask whether they would entertain the notion of changing the order of business from Madam Barrados first to committee business first to dispose of the motions that are before us, and then call Maria Barrados for the balance of the time.

May I see an interest on the part of the committee to do that? The primary reason is that I'm unfortunately going to have to leave the chair in about one hour. I'd prefer to be in the chair, if I may, during the motions, and then call on Mr. Warkentin to be in the chair for the balance of the time for the witnesses.

May I see, from the committee, whether there is any appetite to flip? Is that fine? Okay.

So if I may move to that, I believe there are three motions before us: two by Mr. Warkentin and the first one by Madam Coady. Again, I should ask whether members wish to go in camera at this point or if they're fine being in public. In public is fine...? Okay.

All the motions are in order, in my judgment. The order of precedence would be Madam Coady and then Mr. Warkentin with the next two.

Madam Coady, please speak to your motion.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We did take some time at the last meeting to consider my motion. I withdrew it to give committee members time to consider the G-8/G-20 motion. I think it's very important and incumbent upon us as the government operations committee to review the expenditures of G-8/G-20. I have asked for support on this motion so that we can get to work.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I would like to limit debate, but I'm entirely in the committee's hands. We did have a pretty extensive discussion at our

last meeting—two meetings ago, sorry—on this matter. Is there anything else that members wish to add?

Mr. Martin.

• (0850)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** My only reservation with the motion the other day was that it could be that other committees may be undertaking a similar study of the G-8/G-20. I believe the public safety committee is to some extent, and the Auditor General has a study under way to review the overall spending.

But I've recently learned through our whip's office that the Auditor General's report won't be coming down for months and months and months. It isn't on the plate of the public accounts committee at all. Therefore, with that knowledge, I'm inclined to support the Liberals' motion, in that I think there's benefit in us doing a review of those aspects of the G-8/G-20 that we can, in parallel to—and complementary to, I believe—what the Auditor General is doing in a more fulsome way.

**The Chair:** Is there any other discussion?

Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** I just would reiterate probably the reasons: that we would be working to undertake something that would be redundant, in that the Auditor General is doing her study and the public accounts committee would review that, and I'm certain that they'll undertake a study on this as well. As well, the public safety committee is engaged on this at this moment. So I don't see any reason that this committee would take our time....

I think it's incumbent upon this committee to undertake things that wouldn't be done by other authorities or other committees. We have a responsibility to oversee the estimates process. We have a lot of work to do. There's a lot of money that's being spent these days and I think it's incumbent upon us to undertake the responsibilities that fall into our bailiwick, because while we do have the ability to go into other people's jurisdictions, they don't have the same opportunity to come into our jurisdiction. Our job won't get done if we start doing other people's work. That's I guess my rationale and my reason for voting against it.

**The Chair:** Madam Coady.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you very much.

To address those concerns, the public safety committee is only studying the security aspect of the G-8/G-20.

With regard to the Auditor General, she has an awful lot on her plate. As you know, this will not be done this fall; her report indicates that. She won't have an opportunity to get to this for some time next year and then post her review, then the public accounts.... So it could be upwards of one and a half to two years.

This was \$1.5 billion spent over a three-day summit, and I think it's incumbent upon the government operations committee to review that spending.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Not seeing further debate, may I call the vote?

Shall we go on division, or do you want a head count? On division...?

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** The motion passes.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The second motion, Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, in terms of Bill C-429, I know that there's been a lot of interest expressed from a number of different stakeholders. We have compiled a list of the folks we think are important to have as witnesses. Obviously, I think it's important that we as a committee come to an agreement as to how to move forward, but I think it's important that we have this discussion as to how we want this to work.

Today is the day that we need to do this because Tuesday and Thursday of the week we return, I expect we will be having hearings, so I do propose this motion. I'm amenable to changes, to include witnesses that people feel are essential, but clearly I think it's important that we do give a say to people.

As you know, there have been dozens and dozens of people who have contacted all of our offices in an effort to get the attention of this committee.

**The Chair:** The chair recognizes Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I ask that Mr. Warkentin withdraw his motion.

First of all, it shows a total lack of respect for parliamentarians. Bill C-429 is actually a private member's bill, and nowhere in his motion does he mention the person who introduced Bill C-429 in the House. I think that the member who sponsored Bill C-429 should at least be one of the witnesses we hear from.

Secondly, the motion includes groups that were on the list that our clerk sent to us. As far as I can tell, Mr. Warkentin's motion does not include any of the names of the witnesses proposed by the Bloc Québécois. I find that pretty disrespectful towards our party, given that Bill C-429 was put forward by the Bloc Québécois. If Mr. Warkentin says that it was an oversight, that he forgot to add those things to his motion and that he is prepared to amend it, I would accept that he not withdraw his motion. As it stands now, it shows a complete and total lack of respect for us.

• (0855)

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I'll take it as a friendly amendment. Why don't you propose it?

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Do you accept that?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, I think I was clear in the beginning that I'm happy to amend the motion to include other witnesses that people feel are essential to the discussion.

I know that there have been a number of people and groups who have contacted the clerk's office, as well as my own office, since I composed this. There are clearly other people who should be added. I have no question about that, and, madam, I'm happy to include those people.

I'm amenable to having people amend the motion. I just think it's important that we undertake this work today, so we can undertake this study starting Tuesday and Thursday of the week we return.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** In that case, Mr. Warkentin, I accept your amendment suggestions. Rest assured that right now Quebeckers are making arrangements to come and meet with the committee members. If they have not already done so, I think there will be more people contacting the clerk very soon, and that is why we need to remove the October 28, 2010 deadline.

I understand that we need a deadline and that we will eventually need to conclude our work. I already indicated at the beginning of the session that we would probably need more time. This is important; my colleagues at this table need to understand how important it is to Quebec that its industries be heard. Therefore, we need to allocate the time necessary. Is that clear?

So the first amendment would be to immediately remove the October 28, 2010 deadline. We need to give everyone an opportunity to be heard. That does not mean I want us to spend an excessive amount of time on this, but I want us to at least remove the deadline. Then we need to say that we will accept any other witness who wants to be heard. Please, members of the committee, this is paramount for Quebec.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ladies and gentlemen, I am conscious of time here, and I don't want this part of the procedures to extend too much further.

Perhaps I can suggest this as a proposal. First of all, Mr. Warkentin moved a motion. Madame Bourgeois had some objections to it. Mr. Warkentin has amended his motion.

At this point, I have about 25 or 30 witnesses on a one-paragraph bill. May I suggest that we call Mr. Asselin, the proponent of the bill, and we dedicate one of the two days that we have in the first week back after Thanksgiving: he and his proponents would take the first hour and those who are opposed would take the second hour. At the end of that first day of witnesses, the committee would make a decision as to whether it wishes to hear further witnesses.

May I further suggest that among the four parties, they group the witnesses in the most advantageous way possible so that they can give instructions to the clerk and people can be called and witnesses be made available to the committee.

Is that a reasonable approach? Is that...?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Given....

Yes, Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I would say that Mr. Warkentin has given his opinion, and so have I. I have made it clear to everyone that right now witnesses are making arrangements to be heard. I think it is too soon to say that we are going to spend two hours, two meetings or four hours on this.

First, can we have a list of witnesses? Second, based on the wink Mr. Warkentin gave earlier, I am going to meet with him to explain clearly and thoroughly the implications of our approach on Bill C-429. Even though it is just a paragraph or a sentence, it is critical to the recognition of Quebec's needs and the expression of those needs. I am prepared to meet with Mr. Warkentin to come up with a motion we are both satisfied with.

● (0900)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** This is progress.

Mr. Regan.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the committee will meet 16 times between now and Christmas. That is not a lot considering how much we have to do. I would agree to allocating two days to hearing from witnesses on this single-paragraph bill. We need to keep in mind, however, that even if it makes it through the House of Commons, there is very little chance—perhaps none—that it will make it through the Senate, where the Conservatives are in control. We still have other very important business to attend to, and I think we should group the witnesses, as you suggested. We need to hear from people who support the bill and from those who oppose it. Given that we have only 16 days of meetings, we should not spend more than 2 days on it, in my opinion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I am kind of concerned about the major issue, which is time. I'm particularly concerned about time this morning.

Mr. Martin, please make a brief intervention.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I'll be as brief as I can.

**The Chair:** Yes, I know it's a challenge.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** You know, we really can't dedicate a great deal of time to this issue. We have a scandal within the Department of Public Works about the very buildings we're sitting in, looming on the front pages of the newspapers. We're the oversight committee for Public Works and Government Operations. This committee would be

negligent if it weren't at least seized of the issue of the possibility of corruption in the allocation of major government contracts.

So while we're flitting around over somebody's notional musings in a small private member's bill, we have under way what could be the biggest scandal since the CPR, for God's sake, and we're kind of oblivious to it.

That's my concern, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you for those musings, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Warkentin, final word, please.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Chair, I'm amenable to whatever type of work the opposition wants to undertake. What I'm concerned about is that we will return on Tuesday following Thanksgiving and are going to expect to do something. If we don't get this dealt with today—and that's fine, as there doesn't seem to be a willingness to do it—my question is, what are we going to do, or how are we going to work this? Are we going to set up a committee that will meet during Thanksgiving? That seems unreasonable.

So I'm wondering what we're going to do. Are we meeting tonight, tomorrow, Monday? If we meet on the Monday that we return, there's not going to be enough time to prepare a committee meeting for Tuesday.

That's my concern.

**The Chair:** I will assure you, Mr. Warkentin, that the committee agenda will be occupied on Tuesday.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Okay, but we haven't agreed as a committee to do anything for that Tuesday.

**The Chair:** It generally falls to the chair to try to set the agenda for the committee. I take some guidance from what is said. I would wish that the four representatives of the committee get the most effective list of witnesses possible so that we could be ready for Tuesday. That's largely dependent upon the four representatives of the committee. Otherwise, our clerk is left without guidance, and I certainly want to make sure he works over the course of the week that is off.

Absent any other issues, I'm going to call it there....

Oh, Madam Coady.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you very much.

I have given due notice of motion for the production of papers for G-8/G-20, and considering that we've agreed to study G-8/G-20, I think it would be important for us to review this particular motion calling on basically a production of papers, so that when we sit down to review this we have the documentation required.

● (0905)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin, you had a third motion with respect to a subcommittee. I hope it's not nearly as controversial as the last one.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I have spoken to the clerk, and we do have....

I won't move that at this time.

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** No, Mr. Warkentin's has precedence over your motion.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** What I want assurance of, Mr. Chair, is that at least there would be some mechanism to inform the respective parties sooner than one day before as to what the meetings will be. It's very difficult for committee members of all different stripes to prepare for committee meetings when we're only told who the witnesses will be the day before or the day of.

I understand from the clerk that there is a mechanism for a subcommittee that's already in place, but perhaps there is some way, Mr. Chair, that you would engage that subcommittee while there are decisions being made as to who the witnesses will be for successive meetings.

**The Chair:** We'll be happy to set up the subcommittee with representatives of each party. My only comment on that is that I have sat on way too many committees in which the subcommittee formulates an agenda, presents it to the main committee, and the main committee rehashes the whole thing all over again.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** My concern is not that. I agree with you. I don't want to have additional meetings for the sake of having additional meetings. What I do want is some mechanism whereby there will be feedback from the chair as to what we can anticipate when we return.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's a legitimate comment. We will set up a meeting of some kind with representatives from all parties, hopefully sooner rather than later.

So those are your two motions.

Madam Coady has put forward a motion. I'd ask the clerk whether her motion is in order or whether it's ancillary to her previous motion. Depending on the case, it could require 48 hours.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** It is a different motion, but she has already given the 48 hours' notice.

**The Chair:** So it's in order.

Madam Coady, would you move your motion, please.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to move to require the production of papers around G-8/G-20.

Would the chair require that I read it into the record?

**The Chair:** You should, yes.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** I move: That the Committee requests the Government provides it with the details of all costs associated with the G8 and G20 Summits, from all departments and agencies, including for goods, services and overtime salaries, providing for each contract (i) the name of the contractor, (ii) a description of the goods or services provided, (iii) the value of the contract, (iv) how the contract was awarded, (v) whether the cost was associated with the G8, G20 or both, within 10 business days.

**The Chair:** Any discussion on that motion?

Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I'll oppose this motion simply because we know that 90% of the costs related to the G-8 and G-20 were security

costs. Many of these are kept confidential for the sake of security reasons, and therefore I won't support it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any other comments? May I call the vote?

Those in favour?

Those opposed?

Okay. The motion....

Thanks very much for leaving me with that tie vote—again.

The motion passes.

(Motion agreed to)

•(0910)

**The Chair:** May I call Madam Barrados, please.

Madam Barrados, welcome to the committee.

I know you have an extensive commentary because I tried to read some of it, my gracious me. I was going to say we look forward to what you have to say, and indeed we do. I appreciate your effort to come before the committee. As you know, there are opening remarks and then members will ask questions.

Welcome to the committee, Madam Barrados, and I would anticipate that you would introduce your colleagues.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Maria Barrados (President, Public Service Commission of Canada):** Thank you and good morning.

Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election as the chair of the committee; it is always a pleasure to appear before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. I am here with Donald Lemaire, Senior Vice-President, Policy Branch, and Elizabeth Murphy-Walsh, Vice-President, Audit and Data Services Branch, to discuss the 2009-2010 Annual Report of the Public Service Commission of Canada, as well as nine audit reports and a study on the use of temporary help services within the public service. They were all tabled in Parliament on Tuesday and were referred to this committee.

For the benefit of the new members, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent agency accountable to Parliament for safeguarding the integrity of staffing in the public service and the political impartiality of public servants. The PSC is independent of ministerial direction, and we hold executive authority for hiring. We report annually to Parliament on our activities and results.

The PSC's 2009-2010 annual report covers the fourth year of operation under the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA). As of March 2010, there were 84 organizations, representing over 216,000 individuals, to which the PSC had delegated its appointment authority.

In 2009-2010, the public service continued to grow but at a slower rate, 3.4%, as compared with 4.5% in 2008-2009. There was also a slowdown in hiring and staffing activities.

Based on our oversight activities in 2009-2010, significant progress has been made in implementing the PSEA over the past four years. The essential elements of the PSEA are in place, and there continues to be advances in achieving its objectives. The core values of merit and non-partisanship, and the guiding values of fairness, access, transparency and representativeness are generally being respected across the public service.

Still, more work needs to be done to ensure that managers fully understand how to apply the core and guiding values to their decisions. We have found that the behaviour of managers suggests that the values, and their interconnections, are not yet sufficiently understood and that staffing decisions are not yet sufficiently based on values.

We also note that there are persistent inconsistencies across organizations in the implementation of the values-based approach, for instance, in the use of advertised versus non-advertised appointment processes, and in the lack of documentation of decisions. A more concerted effort is needed from everyone in the public service to ensure a values-based approach to staffing.

• (0915)

[English]

This brings me to the issue of temporary help services and short-term hiring in the public service. They represent useful tools to address short-term needs such as temporary workload increases. PSEA organizations spent approximately \$300 million on temporary services in 2008-09, a threefold increase over the past decade, most of which occurred in the national capital region. This upward trend is of concern, as it poses risks to the integrity of the staffing system.

At the request of this committee in April of 2009, the PSC undertook a study on the use of temporary help in the public service. Our study found improper uses of temporary help contracting to address long-term staffing needs. Managers are given little guidance on how to consider the PSEA when using temporary help. The result of the pattern of usage observed was a circumvention of the PSEA. We also found that about one in five temporary workers was employed in the public service following their contract, with the majority appointed to permanent positions.

The PSC will consult with Treasury Board Secretariat and Public Works and Government Services to address issues raised in the study and to provide guidance to deputy heads on the appropriate use of this mechanism in relation to the PSEA.

Another area of concern is time to staff. While there has been a notable reduction in time to staff collective advertised processes—from 27.4 weeks in 2007-08 to 24.7 weeks in 2008-09—the average time to staff indeterminate, or permanent, advertised positions has remained relatively stable at around 23 weeks.

Time to staff a position can be significantly reduced within the existing PSEA framework and policies without compromising our staffing values. Our research has shown that further efficiencies can be achieved through strong HR planning and project management. We are encouraging organizations to be more aggressive in addressing time to staff, including establishing benchmarks.

I would now like to turn to our audits. The PSC identified three recurring themes in these audits: first, appointment decisions not always being fully documented; second, poor rationales being used for non-advertised appointment processes; and third, the ongoing need to improve quality control on appointment processes.

As a result of our audit, we have imposed additional conditions on the delegation of staffing authorities at the National Parole Board. The National Parole Board has provided us with an action plan that outlines how the organization will respond to the audit recommendations. The chairperson of the board will also be required to provide us with semi-annual reports on progress made against the action plan.

As a result of its follow-up audit, the PSC has removed conditions it had placed upon the Canadian Space Agency following its 2006 audit. No additional conditions have been placed on any other entities audited by the PSC this year.

Now I'd like to turn to the subject of employment equity and the progress made with respect to the recruitment of four designated groups. Three of these groups—women, visible minorities, and aboriginal peoples—are now being appointed to the public service at a proportion exceeding their workforce availability. We continue to see increased hiring of visible minorities. They account for 21.2% of external appointments, up from 18.8% in the previous year. Persons with disabilities remain the one group where the share of appointments is below their workforce availability.

The PSC is also committed to making federal employment opportunities here in the national capital region available to all Canadians. We have seen an increased rate of application from outside the NCR, as well as a higher rate of appointment of those applicants for both officer and non-officer jobs in the NCR. This means that the national area of selection policy is having a positive effect and helping to improve access to public service jobs for Canadians.

[Translation]

In looking to the future, we know this is a critical time for Canada's public service and for the PSEA. There are early signs of the rate of growth of the public service slowing further in the months ahead, as well as a decline in the level of staffing activity. Targeted human resources plans, including succession planning and talent management, will be increasingly valuable tools for managers as they seek to hire the right people within available budgets.

We have seen progress in key areas of concern, and the system has consistently demonstrated an ability to learn, respond and adapt to change.

The PSC will continue to support departments and agencies to become more efficient by providing innovative services, tools and technologies.

• (0920)

[English]

We are also moving forward with a preliminary assessment of the PSEA. We will be providing parliamentarians with a spring report that will assess the effectiveness of the legislation and recommend areas for change. This assessment will contribute to the formal legislative review of the PSEA led by the President of the Treasury Board.

I understand this committee has a very broad mandate, including oversight of the Public Service Commission. Your committee was asked to recommend to Parliament my appointment as president. You review the results of our work in our annual report, audits and special reports, as we are doing today. You also recommend for approval our estimates, reports on plans and priorities, and departmental performance reports.

These documents tell the story of how we are managing our finances and other challenges: dealing with sunseting money, operating internal cost-recovery services, absorbing strategic review reductions, and dealing with the operating budget freeze. I look forward to discussing them with the committee.

My mandate ends in May 2011, as do the mandates of the PSC's two part-time commissioners. I would like to thank the members of this committee for your interest in the federal public service and the work of the Public Service Commission.

Thank you. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Barrados.

I'm going to call now on committee members to have the first round of eight minutes each.

I believe Madam Coady leads off.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you very much.

We certainly appreciate you being here this morning, for the hard work that you do, and for having patience with us while we attended to committee business. So thank you very much, and yes, I agree with the chair, it was a comprehensive package of information that we had to review, and it was most enlightening.

I'd like to ask the first question concerning pretty much what you said toward the end of your opening remarks, and that was the challenges with the budget issues. I'm going to lump them all into one particular area. You are dealing with sunseting money. You're dealing with operating internal cost recovering services. You said that in your opening statement.

I do know that you had to transfer 6.5% of your budget to another department because of a shortfall, and I also know that you're dealing with a budget freeze. It's not only the 6.5% that you were required to give under review and under a shortfall, but also that you have a budget freeze, and actually, as part of the strategic review, perhaps even a 5% decrease.

Can you talk to the challenges and risks that poses for your department, and to why you needed to give that 6.5% to another department? Thank you.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I would just ask for clarification on the 6.5%.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** I understood that you had to give moneys to another department last year under the budget. I think Statistics Canada required some money.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I see, yes. It wasn't 6.5%, but we were required to transfer \$133,000 and \$225,000, for a total of \$358,000, for savings. One amount—\$133,000—went to the census, and for procurement savings there was \$225,000. There was a requirement to do that.

With respect to the general question that is being asked, there is no doubt that the Public Service Commission is facing significant financial pressures. When I talk about sunseting money, this is the money we had for our electronic system, so this is the system for all Canadians to be able to apply to jobs, and the electronic screening behind that. We have since managed to fund that within the government, so government departments are paying for the utilization of that system.

There are significant pressures, because we are in cost recovery, for parts of our services. As staffing services go down, we have issues in terms of being sure that we can cover those costs. It means that as an organization, we have to manage our books and start the year with significant reserves. So it really requires quite a bit of tight financial planning on our part.

We had strategic review cuts. We've done the second year. We have one more year of cuts, in the order of \$4.3 million that we had to take out of the budget, out of the base. In addition to that, we have an operating budget freeze, which we estimate will take about \$1.3 million out of the base every year—this past year and for the next two years. So we have these ongoing reductions.

I'm not unique; the same thing is happening in other government departments. To this point, I think we can manage them, so we are doing a number of things. We are tightly managing our new staffing, so as people leave we are tightly managing the replacement of the new staff. My executive committee is actually reviewing all new staffing requests. We have regular reports on where we are in the budgets, and we have a lot of discussions on what the priorities are.



As well, we are looking to improve the efficiencies of our operations, and fortunately we have been able to get the money for the IT infrastructure we need. But the consequence of that will be that as we replace some staff and not others, we are going to have some people in the wrong spots. So we are making sure we will have money to do training to help reallocate people.

As I said in my opening statement, on the HR side this means more than ever that public service managers will have to manage, and manage very well and very tightly. It is true on the financial side. As I think many members of this committee know, I spent many years in the Office of the Auditor General, so I'm preoccupied with both the financial and the HR side of this. I think as an organization, we are managing.

• (0925)

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you for that report.

I'm just wondering if there is a corollary. You talked about tightly managing new staffing, and you also talked in your report about temporary workers. Could there be a corollary between the two? I'm asking about this generally, not necessarily about your particular department, but overall. We have a tightening of our belts and we have an emergence of these temporary workers. Do you see a corollary between the two?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** There's nothing wrong with temporary workers if they're temporary. What is wrong with the situation we have now is that they're not really used strictly for temporary work. There tends to be an ongoing relationship. It tends to be for long-term relationships, and it tends to be a way to recruit into the public service.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** I'm going to come back to that question, if I may, because I have one more quick question before we go to the next person.

The Privacy Commissioner this week in her annual report talked about the political impartiality monitoring approach—I think PIMA is the acronym—which I understand is under your department's responsibility. It monitors—this is from her report—“the Internet, including media outlets, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, for signs of potentially inappropriate political activity by public servants”.

Now, you can appreciate that there was a concern raised when the Privacy Commissioner put this in her report. It sounds a little like Big Brother, especially when people want to participate in the political process in some ways and means.

Could you please discuss this with us and allay the concerns we have when we read this in the privacy report?

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

I was actually very surprised when I saw this in the report from the Privacy Commissioner, because I have a letter from last May telling me this file was closed.

Perhaps I could just take a minute and explain the two principal activities that we are concerned with at the Public Service Commission. We have a broad mandate to protect the political impartiality of the public service. There are two parts of this mandate. One is if public servants want to run for political office,

they must come to the commission for permission to run and we determine whether their running would in any way compromise the non-partisan nature of the public service.

It has a lot to do with the kind of job they do, the kind of job they go back to if they lose, and the conditions that are imposed when they are campaigning. There are some technicalities where the commission has to be very involved because of the structure of the law.

The second part of the act says that public servants should not be active in such a way that it compromises the non-partisan nature of the public service, so it's speeches, signs, participation in campaigns, but not necessarily being a candidate.

For us to discharge this, we have done two things. One, for those people who are candidates, we do monitor that very closely. We do follow up particularly when they're still working in campaigning. We follow a lot. We scrutinize closely to make sure they adhere to the conditions. We also do some checking when there are a number of campaigns to see if any of the candidates are public servants and they didn't come to us.

With respect to the other general activity, it's just general media monitoring. The first thing that the Privacy Commissioner did was put those two activities together. It was fairly intensive for a very select number of people who were candidates but not for the others. She goes on to say that we have databases that put together opinions, political affiliations, personal causes, hobbies, religious affiliations, and group memberships of past and present public servants. We have never done that, we will not do that, and we are not going to do that.

• (0930)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Barrados.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Bourgeois, you have eight minutes, please.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Barrados, and thank you for being here. I also want to say hello to your team.

I would like to start by thanking you for responding to a request from the members of this committee. Further to a motion by the Bloc Québécois, parliamentarians began asking questions about the astronomical costs that the government was supposed to assume given that it was going through private agencies to hire staff.

We remembered finding out that, in 2009, the federal government had paid out more than a billion dollars to these employment agencies. We also learned, through you, in your role as president of the Public Service Commission of Canada, that the government had a site or mechanisms in place to hire staff. You then submitted a report to us.

You are very brave, in my opinion, because since I have known you, since you have been on the job, you have worked very hard on the staffing process within the public service. I know the process is your baby and matters to you a great deal. If I understand correctly, unfortunately one of your findings was that problems persist with the staffing process, which you have worked so hard on and believe in just as strongly.

I would like you to tell us why managers are having so much trouble finding staff, why they are not using the staffing process that you put in place correctly or as frequently as necessary.

First, however, I want to come back to your report and the matter of temporary help services. On page 6 of the French version, it says that organizations used temporary help contracting services improperly. The study also revealed two practices that suggest the long-term use of temporary help services.

Does that mean, Ms. Barrados, that the public service has a parallel staffing system to the one that is currently in place? Does that mean that, even though a staffing system exists under the Public Service Employment Act, temporary help services—agencies that recruit casual employees—are being used to such an extent that it has created a second staffing system within the public service? Did I make myself clear? Do you understand what I mean?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Yes. Thank you for your comments and questions.

Exactly, we now have a staffing system, especially here, in the national capital region. It is known, we have information on the people, their background and so forth. But we have another system for contract employees. And that system, which enables people to work in the public service on contract, does not provide us with the same information.

During the study, we had a very hard time obtaining information on workers' names, which is the only way we can compare the work they did in the past with the work they are doing right now.

We concluded that we have another system, one that is complicated and difficult to monitor, for reasons that are not always clear. Actually, I think this is a situation where managers in the public service did not oversee the system; it is a bit of an ad hoc system.

Now, it is extremely important that we oversee all aspects of human resources, especially in light of the challenges we face as a government.

● (0935)

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** And that second system, Ms. Barrados, is the one costing us a billion dollars, because it is a parallel system. It is a system of agencies, where you have government managers, for all sorts of reasons mentioned in your report, turning to those agencies whose name has come up repeatedly.

Have you met with these agencies? It says here that there are 176 suppliers, but the big winners are the agencies that were awarded \$133 million in contracts over 5 fiscal years. Another agency received \$72.5 million, and another, \$43.8 million. That is a huge amount of money! Especially when you consider that the government has staffing mechanisms that you put in place, in addition to a Web site where anyone can apply.

According to your report, this means that people who come from agencies are bypassing the Public Service Employment Act system, so we have no security mechanisms covering them. What's more, these people are taking the places of others, because they are able to gain seniority and experience. Yet they do not go through the mechanism in place to get a job, and during their 90 days of

employment, they very often make friends with people who give them full-time jobs.

Ms. Barrados, this is quite a situation. Have you looked into who these three agencies are? Are they agencies with close ties to the government?

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Bourgeois has left you with 45 seconds to respond, Madam Barrados.

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I am sure she can respond as she answers other questions.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I can try to answer quickly. First of all, the billion dollars includes professional contracts, whereas the study dealt strictly with the \$300 million. That is another mechanism, we are talking about the \$300 million.

Yes, we do have a staffing system, and, in my view, as far as all long-term positions are concerned, an ongoing link must be established through the PSC staffing system.

We have done the work for the contracts, but obviously I have received calls from the agencies, and I will be meeting with the people from the agencies in the days ahead.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin, eight minutes, please.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Barrados, for being here again. We appreciate every time that you come. You always bring something new to the table and give us an education. We appreciate it.

I was reading your report yesterday on the use of temporary help services and I want to ask a couple of questions about figures in it. Figure 8 on page 23 shows a graph that demonstrates the different types of help services over the last number of years. I notice that there's a reduction in the "term salary cost" and, it seems, a corresponding increase in the "temporary help services expenditure".

Could you describe for us what the rationale might be, or whether there is a rationale that you've heard from different departments or agencies as to why they might have changed from one to the other? I'm wondering whether it's simply the issue of managing the employee.... I guess I shouldn't presuppose what the reason is.

Do you have any information on that?

● (0940)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It's a very good question, and it's very hard to pin down what is happening there. There are a couple of things I could suggest that might have contributed to this.

One is that when new legislation, the Public Service Employment Act, was passed, it significantly tightened up casual employment. Casual employment had been 120 days, and it was tightened to 90 days. It was restricted to 90 days with really very little room for any kind of exception. That happened roughly in that time period when we saw the rise of the temporary help services.

There were also some changes, particularly in the national capital area, in ways to use the temporary help, which were actually broadening. One is that we have seen a phenomenon now whereby we have professional workers coming in as temporary help. There is a notion that temporary help is clerical and support staff, but about 37% of the people in our sample were actually professionals, some of them earning very high incomes. That's during the same period in which there were other mechanisms whereby you had some of your high-tech workers coming in through executive exchanges, which were shut down. So we have a phenomenon of things being shut down and tightened, and then a growth in the temporary help.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I appreciate that.

In terms of the different types of personnel, I notice in one of the graphs that you have separated the clerical staff from the more professional and the technical, and I'm wondering whether you have noticed a corresponding relationship between the type of qualifications these individuals have and the duration of the contracts.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The professional services people tend to have the longer contracts.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Have you followed that up at all? I'd be interested in why departments or agencies.... I see these different graphs, and you can't just imagine that it's because of an increased workload that they have to bring a person with a specialized qualification in for a duration of a year—or more than a year, in some cases. There must be something else at play.

Have you done any individual case studies, pulling out these individuals and trying to learn the story as to what's going on?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We didn't go down to the individual case studies, but we certainly did ask people why they used these services. We have a chart in which we indicate the reasons that were given and what their relationship was with the length of the contracts. That's on page 38. The reasons were employee leave, pending staffing, staff shortage, workload increases. The workload increases were the ones particularly associated with the longer contracts. These are also associated with the operational and technical services.

From my point of view, whenever you have such a longer-term relationship, I think it should come through the staffing system. There's enough flexibility in the staffing system. Parliament set us a bunch of rules, so it's a parliamentary decision how the staffing system should work, and I think people should be coming through the staffing system for those longer things.

If there is a workload increase, this is a decision that is taken by managers. You should be able to plan it; you should staff accordingly. The staffing system does allow term employment, so you can hire somebody for one, two, three years. You don't have to have everybody working permanently.

• (0945)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I agree with you and I am curious as to why that's not happening. I'm wondering whether there are underlying reasons for this. There seems to be....

Well, let me ask this. Is there any impression you have that managers are hiring people with the intent to—let's use a crude term here—“test-drive” the employee for a period of time, and then, if it

works out, bring them in to permanent employment? Is there any possibility that this type of activity is happening?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I think so, because we see two things. We see a continuous relationship—people will be temporary help, then go on to casual, and go on to temporary help, and then we see one-fifth of them coming into the permanent public service, which is a pretty high number given that you probably have retirees in here as well who don't really want to come into the public service.

The reason that this one particularly bothers me is that it is in the national capital region. The complaints I get all the time are from people outside of this region who want access to government jobs, and if you have this system of employment, you are actually denying access to many Canadians to government jobs.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I'm running out of time, I guess, but I was going to go into the difference between the national capital region and the outlying areas. It seems to be, over the last number of years, that staff shortages have been the significant reason—almost the number one reason, but a close number two—for the rationale for bringing people into these temporary help services. Is there any indication, with the changes in the employment across the country, that...? Have you seen any reduction of the turnover in employment in the regions outside the national capital region? Has there been a reduction in people leaving for other jobs?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We have always had lower turnover in the regions than we have in the national capital region. We have had some slowing down of some of the turnover.

We don't have a retention problem in the Government of Canada. Turnover in the Government in Canada is public servants going from one department to the next. They're very attractive jobs; it's a good place to work.

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

Mr. Martin, you'll have eight minutes, please.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madame Barrados, it seems to me that our worst fears are realized, in a sense, in that we asked you a year ago to investigate further what seemed to be an explosion in the use of temporary help services. You've confirmed and measured those concerns for us here.

One thing that strikes me is that it seems—I think it's reasonable, to answer Chris's question—that one of the reasons they are using these services is that it's simply a cost factor. It's surely cheaper, in most cases, to take on a temporary worker, for whom you don't pay any benefits and there are no pension obligations or legacy costs—all of those things that employers hate these days and that they can bypass.

What concerns me is that they can also bypass all the checks and balances that were put in place when the Public Service Commission was created. The very reason that the commission was created was to be able to ensure the integrity of the hiring process, the impartiality, and do away with nepotism. All of those checks and balances are out the window, if a disproportionate amount of the hiring is done in this way.

You raise another good point. It also rather undermines the notion of a national area of selection. We only just achieved this, that all jobs will be posted nationwide, but if they're bypassing all of that as well, it seems to be a case of one step forward and two steps backward.

You use some very strong language here. You say that your study found "improper uses of temporary help contracting". Could you expand on that? In whose context is it improper, or is it an actual violation of the Public Service Employment Act?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** In the work we did—we are not the contract auditors for the Government of Canada—we didn't look for technical compliance with contracts. What we looked for was the consequence of this kind of contracting and what the impact was for the Public Service Employment Act.

The use of "improper" and "circumventing" regarding the Public Service Employment Act was because we found employees who were there for a long time—many more than a year. Now that's been shortened. There are some new regulations, so it's 48 weeks plus 24 weeks. That's still a long time that you have people coming in this way.

The other thing we found was an ongoing relationship. You had people working as temporary help, and then being casual, and then coming back. Now, the way the system's working, that's not supposed to be happening.

We didn't look at the contracting part of it, but we looked at the consequence of it. The consequence of it is that you have an ongoing relationship through a contracting mechanism, and it should be an employment mechanism. So that's why we used the language.

The other part of these phenomena is that I think individual managers were not doing this to work around the system; they were looking to meet their short-term ends and needs. The consequence is that we have a compromise to the system.

● (0950)

**Mr. Pat Martin:** What ratio of these temporary workers is hired through an agency? I'm a little concerned that the employer-employee relationship for some of these workers is actually with an agency—"Kelly Girls" or something. You're not really working for the federal government, you're working for Kelly Girls, and Kelly Girls is billing the government \$50 an hour and paying you \$12.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** In this study, the \$300 million in contracts that we look at is all through agencies.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** It is all through agencies?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** All through agencies.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** What is the employment relationship, then? I mean, are you working for the federal government or are you working for the agency and being farmed out to the federal government?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** You're working for the agency. But the manner in which they're working suggests they're working for the federal government, and that's the problem.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** That gets into a legal issue, really.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We didn't go there. There is a study by the Conference Board of the private sector in the United States, which in fact went there and said that it raises all kinds of employment issues.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I know. In my own industry, the building industry, this is getting to be a huge problem, with the use of labour brokers. A company will lay off all of their full-time employees and go to a labour broker, with a crew of 20 workers. Essentially, they direct them. All the tests of an employer-employee relationship are there: they tell them what time to come to work, they tell them what work to do, they tell them when to go home. But really, the relationship is with this broker.

So there is a legal grey area of who you're really working for, who your loyalty is to, and what legal protection you have, too.

You've really helped us to identify a real rat's nest here that deserves the attention of this committee. I hope some recommendations will come from this committee to deal with it.

With the last minute I have, let me talk about the political impartiality that Madam Coady talked about. I think we're very fortunate in this country that we have a professional civil service that's not tainted by political bias or leanings, but there seems to be a paranoia on the part of the government that there are Liberals lurking under every desk, sabotaging the work of the government. I think that's probably where this issue keeps surfacing.

I'm wondering what the Public Service Commission can do to dispel that myth and to ratify or confirm, once and for all, that there's no industrial sabotage going on by closet Liberals throughout the public service; that they're not trying to throw a spanner into the gears.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We have a very professional public service. The Public Service Commission has been charged with protecting its non-partisan nature for over 100 years. I took exception to the comments in the Privacy Commissioner's report, because I didn't think they fairly reflected what we did. We are vigilant about it. Our responsibility is for the public service, so our responsibility is not for non-public servants, and our responsibility ends when somebody leaves the public service.

I think the other consideration that is part of the world we live in is because of the charter of rights. The Supreme Court said that public servants do have political rights and have rights to express political views. It makes the work of the Public Service Commission more challenging, because we have to weigh when expression is appropriate as individual rights and comments, of whatever political affiliation, and when it's inappropriate and compromises the non-partisan nature of the public service.

● (0955)

**Mr. Pat Martin:** But putting up a lawn sign during an election campaign wouldn't constitute an indication of bias, would it?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It depends on who you are. I think it would be inappropriate for me to have a lawn sign.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Your time is up, Mr. Martin.

We're going to now move on to Mr. Regan.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Coady was suggesting a moment ago that you might be a closet Liberal. I want you to know that I think she's just trying to flatter you in order to get some preference for the rest of this meeting. I'm not going to do that, I want to assure you.

Madam Barrados, thank you very much for coming today with your colleagues. One of the concerns I've been hearing lately from people in relation to staffing in the public service is about the time it takes just to get fingerprinting done for someone who is applying. We've had people who actually have been selected for a job told that they have a two-month period in which they can complete the process and then told that they won't get their fingerprinting done for 120 days.

To what degree have you heard of this problem, when there are background checks required—which isn't the case for every job, I guess, but for many—being a reason for delay?

You talk about the 23 weeks it takes on average to hire people now, which is unbelievable. Is this part of the problem?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Without a doubt, the 23 weeks is inappropriate and is far too long and is not necessary.

I've had a lot of complaints and issues raised to me as to problems with the process. Two that have been raised the most have been the length of time it takes to do language testing and the length of time it takes to do security clearances.

Language testing is my responsibility. We fixed it. Now the complaints I get are, "Well, I'm not really ready to do my language test yet."

Security clearance is not my responsibility. I've raised, at every opportunity I get, the question of doing something about this. It has to be triaged, in that there are different levels of security; not everybody needs the same level. But it is an issue that has been raised.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Have you seen any staffing or resource issue at Citizenship and Immigration, where now we're seeing that it is taking 228 days to have a permanent residence card renewed, when the norm before was 60 days? That is an incredible increase, and I'm wondering whether you've noted it.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** No, I don't have any information on that.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I don't know what you'll be studying next or what you're working on, but I hope you'll have some time to look at that as well in the future, because it is a grave concern for people. You can only imagine what frustration it causes, particularly when someone's previous card has run out and they haven't got a PR card and can't travel, etc. That's a very big concern.

What do you see as the measures that the government or departments ought to implement to increase the number of people with disabilities working in those departments? You've indicated that in other areas there has been good success in minority or targeted groups being hired, but not with people with disabilities.

I was on the human resources committee at one time, and we did a study of employability in Canada. One of the things we found over and over was that in Canada people are being left by the wayside and that we're missing out as a society from the skills and knowledge of people with disabilities, for example, when often what is required is very little adjustment or arrangement in a workplace, but employers don't realize that.

What do you see as a solution within the civil service?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I'm not sure that I have a magic bullet here, but we certainly can look at the experience of what we have done for visible minorities. On the visible minorities side, I have been coming before Parliament for the whole period of my term raising concerns, and the result of that is that there has been a real mobilization in the public service. We've seen it in the past for women; we've seen it in the past for francophones.

So this, first and foremost, has to get more attention. As part of getting more attention, the message has to go out to the disabled that it is a welcoming workplace. We want to them to apply more. They're not applying in the numbers that they should. That doesn't mean that everybody who applies gets a job, but you want numbers so that you can get people and match their skills.

So that's the first thing that has to happen. We have to have more saying that this is a welcoming place to come.

The second thing we have to do, and this is something that the commission is charged with, is provide more support to departments in doing assessments and making accommodations for the disabled, because many of the disabilities are not seen. Sometimes people don't want to declare them. But if you have some kind of reading problem, for example, you're going to have trouble doing the reading language tests. We have to provide more support in accommodating people in their assessments and, again, let that be known.

On my part, I commit to continue to monitor those numbers, talking it up. And we've had success in the visible minority area, so—maybe I'm overly optimistic—I think we can move this one as well.

• (1000)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Thank you, Mr. Regan.

We're going to go to Madame Faillie, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faillie (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and I work with the reports of the Auditor General, Ms. Fraser. In her report, she indicated that the use of temporary help services was a way to bypass staffing rules in the public service; so she is of the same mind. But I am convinced that there are other ways to bypass the staffing process.

You are aware that since the Federal Accountability Act came into force, various programs in various departments have been the subject of internal reviews. That was the case with the exchanges Canada program, among others. I would just like to draw attention to the findings and conclusions. It was found that managers' roles were not well defined and that skill descriptions were completely lacking, as was any consistency in terms of the required experience and the eligibility criteria. Also mentioned were failures to meet language requirements, real risks of conflict-of-interest situations, ties between incumbents and grant recipients, ties with those the department relied on to deliver contracts, failure to respect assignment policies, and so on.

I agree with my colleagues, Ms. Bourgeois and some others who have asked questions. There seems to be a ploy by the government to favour the use of these agencies and other methods to bypass the staffing system. I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

Furthermore, what concerns us, at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, is that deputy ministers and departments are required by law to submit certain reports to us. And it was reported in the papers that Public Works and Government Services Canada did not report on deadlines, figures or analyses related to the use of temporary help contracts. There seems to be some poor management within that department or a deliberate intention not to disclose information on the use of temporary help services.

How much money is spent on management advisory services, on financial management services, on information technology services? All of those questions are still unanswered.

Do you know whether these agencies have ongoing relationships with the government, with Public Works and Government Services Canada, or other departments and agencies? Do they have their own lobbyists? What reasons do people give you for using these temporary help agencies?

I know that I have asked a number of questions. If you do not have time to answer them all, could you please provide a written response to the committee?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you. I can take a few minutes to answer some of them, and we can provide a written response to the others later.

I do not think there is really a strategy aimed at getting around the act. To my mind, it has more to do with a lack of management. I want to see better management because, in my view, public servants, managers, are not trying to get around the act. Rather it is the result of a lack of management and a lack of attention.

I have another view. My relationship with the deputy ministers is different because I am the one, the president of the Public Service Commission, who delegates responsibilities to the deputy ministers, who must then report back to me. The relationship of accountability is between myself and the deputy minister, which is different from the relationship between the deputy minister and the minister and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I am not surprised that you had trouble obtaining answers to detailed questions, because we had an extremely hard time coming up with these figures. We do not really have a people management system, but rather a contract management system. There is a lot of

information on the contracts, but not on the individuals working under those contracts.

We can try to answer your questions using the information we have, but they will be estimates. We will have to estimate all of these figures based on samples and the work of auditors.

• (1005)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** I'm going to cut in here. We have just exceeded five minutes, so we'll move on to Mr. Gourde from the Conservatives, for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Many thanks to you and your team for being here, Ms. Barrados. Could you describe the challenges facing human resources managers in various departments, given the lack of staff.

If they are using temporary help services, there must be a genuine need for them. Is it that a lot of people are retiring? Is it that people are off on sick leave, maternity leave and so forth? Is it that people are going back to school? Has there been an increase there? If the needs are greater as a result, it must be that departments have work that has to be done within very specific deadlines. If a department ends up with 25% or 30% less staff in a month, that must translate into major challenges for managers.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** People in human resources no doubt have some challenges facing them in the Government of Canada. We have observed a lack of support, tools, systems and guidelines for human resources managers. We have a system with many staffing activities and processes—a large number—and those people are very busy.

We have also seen a lot of turnover within human resources groups themselves. There are certainly some challenges ahead, but what is more important in my eyes is getting the necessary support and training.

People in human resources also need to use the systems in place more, because we have processes at the PSC, inventories and staffing systems that are not always used. I have to say that we have some challenges ahead.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You said earlier that retired employees could return to work for the government through agencies, and those people are very valuable because they have expertise and can train new public servants on various duties.

But these people do not necessarily want to work full time. That may be a way for them to come back and contribute to the government. Is that part of the problem and, at the same time, the solution?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** In my view, retired employees have a lot of knowledge and a lot to contribute. I do not think they need to go through a temporary help agency. We have a staffing process for casual positions, people can receive a professional services contract, we have a staffing process for short-term positions, if it is a public servant with a pension from the federal government. People can obtain those kinds of jobs without it affecting their pension. I do not think it is necessary to go the temporary help services route, except if you are looking for someone to work long term while they are receiving a federal government pension. I do not think that is ideal, that is not the system for it.

● (1010)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I have one last little question. What percentage of public service jobs is staffed by temporary help services? Is it 2%, 3%, 5% or 10%?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** That is an interesting question. It is not a large number. But I have had trouble pinning down a number, because I have all the information on the contracts. I know the expenses involving the contracts.

If we were to estimate the number of people based on the expenses, we could say somewhere between 3,050 and 4,050 people. It is not all that many in proportion to the entire workforce, but if you consider it in proportion to others who are not permanent, it is a lot.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Thank you.

We're now going to turn to Mr. Regan for five minutes.

I believe you'll be splitting your time.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, that's right.

Madam Barrados, in your experience.... When you do a report like this, I'm guessing that not all managers or departments are going to read it, so what kind of follow-up do you do? What are the next steps that follow the tabling of your report?

Also, do you have any recommendations for amendments to the Public Service Employment Act that flow out of what you've found?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** In the process we use in doing our reports, we actually do discuss drafts of these reports as we are completing our work. There is a lot of discussion in the public service, and so each of these reports that touch anyone in the public service, they have looked at.

In the audit side, which we affectionately call "the big green book", we make specific recommendations to departments and we monitor those and follow up. We also have formal delegation agreements and we monitor those. The numbers you see in the annual report are the result of that annual monitoring. So there is a lot of discussion going on, and we do follow up on all of those things. I don't think too many people take it for bedtime reading, except maybe my executive committee.

We are in the process of drafting and suggesting recommendations to changes to the legislation. There is a five-year review process that is required by the legislation. It is led by the President of the Treasury Board. We are making our suggestions to the team that is working on that draft legislation.

However, we will be doing our own report, so our intention is that as soon as the president of the board tables his report, we will table our report. It would be very nice if we were saying the same thing, but we are an independent organization, so we will draw our own conclusions. Parliament will have both of those when they are reviewing the legislation.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Ms. Coady.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you.

I have a couple of questions that I'd like to have answered. I'm looking at the highlights of your annual report. You talk about how "significant growth" in the public service population occurred, a lot of it due to the economic action plan. You talk about how organizations with "roles in delivering" the economic action plan announced in budget 2009 "accounted for half the total growth in the population between March 2009 and March 2010".

Well, the economic action plan, as we know and as the Conservatives have said, is coming to completion in March of 2011. Now, are those temporary positions that were occurring or permanent positions, and what happens after March 2011?

I note specifically that there was a fair increase in communications staff for the PMO, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Privy Council Office. I just think it's unusual. Are these temporary or permanent positions? How does it go forward on that?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The Prime Minister's Office people are not public servants. The Privy Council Office people are public servants. The PMO is not under my domain, but PCO is.

Most of them are permanent hires, so this brings me back to my theme. As public service managers, there has to be a lot of attention paid to this, because most organizations will run with a permanent workforce of up to 80% and 85%. Then, for the other proportion, we'll use what is generally termed as a bit more contingent workforce, so they're people who are not permanent. That allows you to manage as times change and as circumstances and budgets change.

We actually have bumped up on that permanent workforce. So what that means for public service managers as they have to deal with the restraints, the strategic reviews, and the operational freezes, which are real and significant—this is significant money coming out of budgets—is that there will be a challenge in bringing down the workforce, because most of the expenditure for people is salaries.

● (1015)

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** I just find it interesting that the economic action plan is temporary and ends, as we know, in 2011, yet there's permanent support to the Privy Council Office, which supports the Prime Minister.

I have one final question on this round, because I know I'm running out of time. I noted in your report on audit reports that there was an audit of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I note with concern that one of your paragraphs talks about a concern that "DFO's external appointments and appointment processes are not always compliant", and that "merit was not met in some of the external advertised appointment processes and external non-advertised appointment processes audited". You also found, in some of the external appointment processes audited, indicators of "preferential treatment".

Would you please elaborate on what you were speaking of there and how large this concern is?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** We've run out of time, but I'd like you to have an opportunity to answer the question, so please do that.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Okay, I'll do that quickly.

In all the departments that we look at, we raise a number of issues. I have to say that Fisheries and Oceans had a lot of the systems in place and so a lot of the management systems we were looking for.

When we do the actual looking at the files, we look to see if the merit test was demonstrated and met. They had a number that didn't because of some of the errors they made. We also found in our sample that there was personal favouritism.

I'll ask Elizabeth to explain just briefly what our measures were, what we were looking for in personal favouritism, and what we found in the Pacific region in our audit.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Murphy-Walsh (Vice-President, Audit, Evaluation and Studies, Public Service Commission of Canada):** Thank you for the question.

The types of things that we're looking for when we look for indicators of personal favouritism are things like individuals who perhaps had been in the position before as a casual employee, indicators of someone who had an opportunity to provide input into the job description or into the statement of merit, or something along the lines of the changes made to the language profile of the position itself at the time.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Thank you.

Mr. Calandra, for five minutes.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Obviously it's been an extraordinary time. We've had the Olympics, the G-8/G-20, a visit from the Queen. We have the Pan-Am games coming. We've had Afghanistan and the extraordinary response by the government to the crisis in Haiti.

So I'm wondering, when you do a report like this, if you're able to quantify the increases in temporary work with that. Do you also adjust for inflation and salary increases when you're finalizing the dollar value increase?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** We do look, obviously, at the circumstances that departments are facing. For example, if somebody has a big initiative—the economic action plan, for one—we do not go and audit in those departments. If there's a big event going on, we will put that off.

We did not audit External Affairs or go and look at their work while they were doing that. You have to be realistic. I mean, managers have to do their jobs.

We did look, obviously, at this business of how people were employed. My comment, as I was just saying to the other member, was that they were mostly permanent staff.

Now, managers will say that's the only way they can get good people, but it does mean that you do have a problem because you're counting on retirements to give you the employment space that you need to manage your workforce.

We look at positions. We look at people holding positions. We don't worry about the compensation because it's not our responsibility. That belongs to Treasury Board. One of the things that is happening with the operational budget freezes—and I can say that as a manager of my own organization—is that for any increase that is bargained, I have to find the money. In the past, I used to get that from the centre. So it has a real impact.

• (1020)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Okay.

Let me ask you one last question, which I think Mr. Regan had brought up, with respect to people with disabilities. I'm somewhat concerned that perhaps the Government of Canada is not viewed as a friendly spot.

On Tuesday I hosted Vision 2020 here on the Hill. One of the presentations was from a young lady who was visually impaired. She showed some of the equipment that is now available in the workplace that truly makes it easy for her—not easy, I don't want to say that, but easier—to work within that environment.

Do we offer those types of things? Is there also an accessibility issue with respect to the buildings, or a perceived accessibility issue?

I'm concerned that we're not seeing an increase in that. I know that, of course, through the economic action plan we're addressing some of the accessibility issues with respect to federal buildings, but are there other issues that we can more immediately impact to see a more reasonable increase there?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I think that in the Government of Canada, with the size that it is, you'll find good examples of practice. I have people coming to work with Seeing Eye dog, and they have all the computer equipment, and I'm sure there are others who have as well. I'm not sure it's across the board. That may be an issue.

In terms of access, I think this again is an issue where maybe some places are very good. The Government of Canada is spread out in many buildings across the country and I'm not sure it's the same standard everywhere. I think we can be a very good employer for the disabled, but I'm not so sure that message is out there.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Are you finished, Mr. Calandra?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I am. I don't know if Mr. Calkins has anything.



**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Mr. Calkins, do you have any questions—or does anyone else?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** I do have some questions. Is this my five-minute time, or is this...?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Well, no, we'll give you another round.

We'll go around, then. We'll go to Madame Bourgeois for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Barrados, I want to pick up on the discussions my colleague and I had with you earlier. I am having trouble understanding the situation right now. There are some things that do not seem to make sense, and you may be able to shed light on them.

Do I understand correctly that these agencies helped to fill roughly 4,000 positions?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** That is an estimate because I do not have the real figure, so to speak.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** According to what we were told, the federal government spent somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion on that in 5 years. That is a lot for an employment agency. At a time when the government has frozen the budget of virtually every department, and as you, yourself, say in your report entitled, **Casual Employment: Sources and Practices:** The federal government advertises casual and term job opportunities on jobs.gc.ca [...] open to the general public. Individuals with the necessary qualifications are placed in a pre-qualified pool. Sub-delegated managers can then refer to the list [...]

How can we reconcile a freeze on departmental budgets with the fact that we have spent a billion dollars in five years on agencies, when we have a site, which is open to the general public, that we can use to find qualified staff? Can you explain that to me?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Ms. Bourgeois, that is an excellent question. I will ask my colleague Donald to answer that.

But I have to point out that the freeze applies to operating budgets. Furthermore, this is a peak retirement period. We have a high rate of employee turnover, and we have to meet public service renewal requirements. In addition, we are constantly being asked to carry out functions that are increasingly complex.

To me, it is very important that all these positions be staffed through our processes and not other means, except for short terms.

Can I really explain all this? It is not easy.

Donald.

•(1025)

**Mr. Donald Lemaire (Senior Vice-President, Policy Branch, Public Service Commission of Canada):** If the president is having a hard time explaining it, you can imagine how hard it is for me, as well.

The managers are the ones who make the decisions and who are able to identify what their needs are. This is what we do: we create

inventories for administrative positions and other job openings, but we do not place people. It is up to the managers to determine their own needs.

We did not study the reasons why they used a particular inventory over another. We did not look at that in the study, other than a survey question on why they used it. We did not ask them how they identified their needs or how they came to their decisions.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** In your presentation today, you said that this assessment would contribute to the formal legislative review of the PSEA and that you were going to meet with Treasury Board.

Do you intend to create a sort of coordinating committee or management committee with Treasury Board or certain managers at Public Works and Government Services Canada in order to take steps to stop this shameless spending on staffing. The infamous billion dollars this is costing us is an appalling expense, when, if I understand correctly, the public service has everything it needs to staff positions through its own channels. Do you intend to set up a committee?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I am on....

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** There are about 30 seconds left for you to answer the question, but we'll give you a little extra time if you need it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I am on deputy minister committees, which gives me the opportunity to address these issues. The role of a deputy ministers committee is to give me advice. I use these deputy minister subcommittees to send the message that this is a necessary conversation. It is extremely important to me that we have these discussions under the current system. Creating a special committee is risky because it is completely outside the system that works. My experience has been that deputy ministers and managers want to do things their way, but they need to be encouraged, pushed, and they need to be given tools. It would be incredibly difficult to establish a system to oversee this staffing mechanism of hiring people through temporary employment agencies.

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Thank you.

Mr. Martin has left, so we're going to move over to the next questioner, which is Mr. Calkins. Then we'll go over to....

Excuse me, did you have a...?

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** I'm not sure we'll have time today to do that. We'll see how it....

Yes, if you want to share your time, that'll work great.

Mr. Calkins.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I'm new to this committee. I think this is my third committee meeting here, and this is my first opportunity to hear testimony and a presentation from the Public Service Commission. So I'm probably going to come across as a little bit rough around the edges, but I hope you'll bear with me.

As I've been reading through the analysts' preparation from the library and taking a look at some of the other notes I have, including your reports, I've come to a couple of conclusions in my head, and I hope you can tell me if those conclusions are accurate or not.

You say in your report that the Public Service Commission says that women, visible minorities, and aboriginal people are now being hired to the public service in proportions exceeding their respective workforce availability. So I'm reading in there that there are actually more positions available in the public service through affirmative action initiatives than there are people who are actually qualified and applying for those.

I'm also reading that there is no verification of education credentials. My mind tells me right away that if there were verification of education credentials, the pool that is already being drawn from excessively for hiring purposes might, depending on the verification of credentials, actually get smaller.

You've also stated that the current practice of using temporary workers is growing at a rate that some may find alarming. It would seem to me that if employers—the various departments in the administration—are limited in their ability to hire from a talent pool because of our affirmative action policy, they have no choice but to contract out positions. Because if they were to hire—to be blunt about it—a white boy with a master's degree in public administration, that would throw off their numbers when it comes to affirmative action in their departments. So their only option might be that they have to hire somebody on a contracted basis in order to make sure the numbers aren't skewed.

Am I misinterpreting the information of your findings?

• (1030)

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** That's not quite the way I see it. The Government of Canada does not have an affirmative action plan. Despite some of the language, there is not an affirmative action plan.

What we do have is—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** If I may, I do want to give you an opportunity to answer, because I want to be clear about affirmative action policies, but I just want to elaborate on my question.

I was listening to various talk radio shows during the summer—I don't know if it was Charles Adler or the Roy Green show—and there was a lady from Alberta, I believe, who was trying to apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada online but wasn't allowed to: the question asked her what her ethnic background was, and she was denied even making the application into the department based on the fact that she wasn't, I believe, a native Canadian.

You're telling me that we don't have an affirmative action plan. The people I represent in my constituency are telling me they can't get a job based on the colour of their skin.

Could you please square that circle?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The case you're talking about was not from Alberta but from Ontario—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** From Ontario? Okay.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I followed that case fairly closely.

Back to my comments, we don't have an affirmative action plan, but we do have a statute that is called the Employment Equity Act. That charges the government to have employment of the four equity groups—women, visible minorities, aboriginal people, and the disabled—at their workforce availability. So the objective is for managers to manage their workforce to get it to workforce availability. We have provisions in our act that say managers can restrict a particular process to a member of those groups if they have done their planning and they determine that for their department, their organization, for the kind of work they do, they are not sufficiently representative.

I have made statements a number of times that I feel, given the representativity of women, it really isn't appropriate to be using those special mechanisms to get women into the public service. But for the other three groups, we do have issues of representativity. And it's representative of the Canadian population: it's extremely important that the public service reflect the people it serves.

So what we have, then, is a department in this particular case that said, "I am short, and look at our whole workforce: we are short of visible minorities and aboriginal people". Now, there are two ways that this can go. The department can say right up front, "We are going to try, if we can...". It has to be meritorious. They have to meet the merit tests. You cannot come in, regardless of who you are, if you don't make the merit test. You—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Okay. Given that, when it comes to merit testing, are the merit levels equal across the board depending on the colour of your skin? Because I applied to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police back in the 1990s, and the merits I had to achieve for my standards of hiring were different than others, so I guess I'm wondering, from a merit-based approach....

And I agree with you. A merit-based approach should be the way it is as long as the merits are applied to all people equally, except for maybe in the situation of people with disabilities if it's a physical requirement to do a job. You could bring some comfort to me in letting me know that the merit-based approach is fair merits for all.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** It is. The process we go through is that we have a statement of merit: merit must be met. Now, the issue is, what if everybody meets merit? Then who do you choose? I feel it's important to tell Canadians up front what their chances are of getting a job.

If you are looking.... This particular case was an AS-1. AS-1s are paid over \$50,000 and they don't require post-secondary education. This is administrative support. We have no problem getting people to do this. I think it's fairer to say up front that we are trying to get visible minorities and aboriginal people.

They must meet that merit test. If I have a pool of people, why should I make people apply and then have them, at the end, not be chosen? Because we can go two ways. We can say you meet this merit test, and it's in two parts: what you must meet or what would be nice to have, what we'd like to have. So you can put "you must meet", and it could be a member of the group, or you could put it in "nice to have". If you put it in "nice to have", you're going to have a whole bunch of people applying, and they're not going to get the job anyway because you'll go to the "nice to have". So I think it's important that we tell people, all Canadians, up front.

Now, having said that, there are still a lot of jobs and a lot of hiring, but we get many more applications. We get hundreds and hundreds of applications for jobs.

• (1035)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Sorry, but we are out of time on that.

I'm going to give Ms. Coady a little bit of extra time as well. If you want to share that time, that would be fine.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Okay. If we're going to get extra time, I'm going to throw in a third question.

I heard from you that temporary workers are hired through temporary agencies. Could you provide this committee with a list of those temporary agencies and the amounts of these contracts?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** If I have that information, I'd be happy to provide it. If I don't have it, I would send that to Public Works and Government Services to respond to the committee.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** That would be great. Thank you very much.

How are these temporary agencies determined?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** That is a process run by Public Works and Government Services. They are the—

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Through tender?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Yes.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Okay. So it's a tendered process.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Yes.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you.

I want to go back to the political impartiality monitoring approach, because I didn't get a chance to finish that earlier. I think the Privacy Commissioner indicated that the Public Service Commission was going to narrow PIMA, and that the commissioner's office would receive a new privacy impact assessment on the modified approach before the end of 2010. The indication from the Privacy Commissioner was that they would still specifically consider the necessity, proportionality, and effectiveness of the initiative of the revised project.

Could you please inform the committee where you are on the modified approach? Will we have it by the end of 2010? And will it reflect the concerns of the Privacy Commissioner?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** The Privacy Commissioner's test of necessity, proportionality, and effectiveness is a standard test. They apply that to anyplace where there might be a privacy issue.

My view is that the risks here are extremely low, despite the words, just because of how limited we are in what we do. We're looking at public information. We're taking public information and we're matching it with public servants themselves, where they work, which is basically in the telephone directory of the public service.

So there is a matching going on, which is where the Privacy Commissioner always asks questions, but it's with public information. We will have that done this year. We're in constant discussions with the Privacy Commissioner, so they are aware of what we're doing.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Thank you.

I have a final question before I hand it over to Madame Bourgeois. Between 2001 and 2010, the federal civil service grew by, I believe, roughly 27% or 28%. Yet the executive branch grew by 56% or 57%. I even note in your report you talk about, for example, an increase of 4.7% in the executive group.

Could you comment on that? Is there an excessive amount going to the executive group? And is that shared across the country, or is it focused here in the capital region?

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** I believe that's a trend for the whole public service. There are more executives in the national capital region than there are in the rest of the country. You have more of the senior positions. You have the headquarters of the departments in the national capital region. They're located where their ministers are, so that's not surprising.

There could be a number of things going on, and I'm not sure exactly what all is going on. Without a doubt, we have work becoming more complicated. We have a government that is changing, that is moving from a lot of the clerical, routine kind of work. We're automating more of that work. We're farming more of that out. We're looking for more higher-educated, strategic-thinking kinds of individuals. You would be paying those people more, and hence it's not surprising you have them in the executive group.

The other thing we have going on is that the executive group is the group that has the greatest amount of retirement. The retirements departure in the public service tends to run around 4%. The executive group is 9%. Most of the growth that you see in the executive group, the big growth, is at the junior level, that EX-1 level. There has to be replacement and development. We paid a terrible price for the freezes we had in the nineties. There are some gaps in that executive group, so we have to bring those people up.

Those are two quite possible explanations. There could be some great inflation as well. But I'm not really in a position to say what exactly we've got going on there.

• (1040)

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** I'd now like to turn it over to Madame Bourgeois.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Absolutely.

You have a couple of minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Barrados, I want to pick up on the desire for change you talked about earlier. You said that your group of managers, with whom you were in contact, had shown a willingness to change to improve hiring and staffing practices. You said they should be encouraged.

First of all, I want to know who should be encouraging them and how; what approach should be taken?

Second, the committee has always supported your work. We are happy to support you, to help you, if need be. If possible, we would like for you to give the committee an update—say every three months—on the work you are doing or the progress you are making with the group of managers you are going to be meeting with, the group where you will discuss change, improvements you want to make to this staffing process for better transparency and compliance with the government's financial requirements.

**Ms. Maria Barrados:** Thank you very much.

We have begun discussions on the report itself, and I have met with the Treasury Board Secretariat, the deputy minister of Public Works and the clerk. We have started those discussions, and I will continue with those efforts.

I have a meeting with the deputy ministers next week to discuss the annual report, and obviously we will talk a lot about this issue, as will be the case with the other deputy minister committees. I would be very pleased to follow up with you in three months, to talk about the kinds of meetings that were held and the progress we have made.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you very much.

That is all, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Thank you.

We thank you again for coming to our committee. We appreciate your testimony every time you come before us. There are always things for us to learn and areas that we know will occupy our time

and our discussions at forthcoming committees. Thank you so much. We now want to invite you, or free you up, to leave. We do appreciate your attendance.

Committee members, we do have just a little bit of a tentative schedule. Before the chair left, he and I talked over the possibilities for the week we come back.

I think it's important for you to know that on the nineteenth we will not discuss Bill C-429, because Mr. Asselin cannot be here until the twenty-first. On the twenty-first, we will plan for it to be the first day of hearings on Bill C-429. The first hour will be given to the private member who is proposing the bill, as well as any of his proponents for the bill, if he wants to bring additional business people or whomever for the discussions.

For the second hour, what we are suggesting is that if every party wants to propose two different witnesses as possibilities for that second hour, we will then begin this discussion. Then, at the end of that meeting, we can determine as committee members if we want to extend the hearings or if we've heard enough. That seems to me to maybe be a way in which we can begin the process.

In terms of the meeting of the nineteenth, right now we have two different options that we've conceived. One is having Correctional Services here and hearing from them. We did hear from the PBO on theirs, but they are the last witness we need for the one study. The other is to get a high-level briefing on G-8 and G-20. It seems like committee members are excited in regard to getting onto that. There is a possibility that if Correctional Services are not available we could maybe get a high-level briefing on G-8 and G-20 from PCO or some other organization, if there's a willingness.

Again, by tomorrow we do need suggestions from the parties with regard to witnesses for Bill C-429. We'll ask the clerk to inform Mr. Asselin that we expect to do that on the twenty-first, to just confirm it with him, and then, I guess, work with his colleagues in the Bloc to bring witnesses who are in support of his bill, for that first hour.

**An hon. member:** *C'est beau.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin):** Very good. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.







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