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Chair

Mr. Pat Martin

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•(0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

We'd like to convene the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Today we will be examining the supplementary estimates (B), with witnesses from the Department of Public Works and Government Services. Even though they don't have any representation directly or any supplementary estimates (B) to submit for examination or votes, we'll look forward to questioning them on other reports, etc.

We will also be having as witnesses representatives from the Privy Council and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada. We're beginning, though, with the Department of Public Works and Government Services. I believe Mr. Andrew Treusch will be giving opening remarks.

Perhaps you could introduce your panel as well. You are welcome, and you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Andrew Treusch (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Andrew Treusch. I'm the associate deputy minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

[Translation]

I am pleased to be here along with my colleagues, Alex Lakroni, who is our Chief Financial Officer, John McBain, Assistant Deputy Minister of our Real Property Branch, and Pablo Sobrino, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of our Acquisitions Branch.

[English]

I'm here today to speak about our 2011-12 departmental performance report, our 2012-13 supplementary estimates (B), as well as our achievements under the deficit reduction action plan.

I understand the committee is interested in the fact that we are not requesting any additional funds through supplementary estimates (B). Departments table supplementary estimates primarily when approvals occur after main estimates for items such as new funding for existing programs, items announced in the federal budget, or reallocations of funds between appropriations. Like other government departments, PWGSC is not obligated to ask for funding through supplementary estimates if we have sufficient cash on hand through existing appropriations to cover any additional program

requirements. This principle is at the heart of responsible spending and sound financial management. I want to emphasize, however, that the supplementary estimates are a normal part of the government's budgetary procedures and will remain a part of our department's fiscal cycle.

[Translation]

PWGSC is the government's principal common service organization, providing government departments and agencies with services in support of their programs.

[English]

Our main services include procurement, office accommodation and facilities, architectural and engineering services, construction, maintenance and repair of public works and federal real property, translation and related services, and pay and pension.

[Translation]

The minister of PWGSC serves as the Receiver General for Canada and has authority for the administration of pay services for federal employees. The minister is also responsible for maintaining the Public Accounts of Canada.

PWGSC's vision is to excel in government operations, by delivering high-quality services and programs that meet the needs of federal organizations while ensuring sound stewardship on behalf of Canadians.

[English]

We play an important role in the daily operation of the Government of Canada as its principal banker/accountant, central purchasing agent, linguistic authority, and real property manager. We manage a diverse real estate portfolio that accommodates some 269,000 federal employees in 1,819 locations across Canada, including these Parliament buildings; we purchase more than \$16 billion of goods and services annually, representing some 54,000 contracts through government procurement; we prepare the public accounts; and we manage a cashflow of more than \$2 trillion each year.

[Translation]

We translate more than 1 million pages of text on behalf of federal organizations, and provide translation and interpretation services for Parliament and its committees.

[English]

For 2012-13, our total gross budget, as approved by Parliament, is \$6.1 billion. Our department is heavily revenue-dependent, with 56% of our expenditures, or \$3.4 billion, covered by revenues from client government departments. This, therefore, leaves us with a net appropriation of \$2.7 billion.

Our operating vote totals \$3.3 billion, and this has two basic components. First, \$0.9 billion is required to deliver on our core programs, such as central purchasing and banking, public accounts, payroll and pension services, and our own internal services. The second part, \$2.4 billion, is required to pay for rent, fit-up, and utilities for government-wide accommodation, Receiver General functions, like payment and related overhead, and translation services to Parliament.

We also deliver a number of other services to federal departments, such as real property project management and translation, and these, again, would be on a full cost-recovery basis.

Finally, PWGSC has a capital vote of some \$518 million, primarily to invest in Government of Canada buildings and infrastructure.

• (0855)

[Translation]

Last year PWGSC made significant progress on several major initiatives. I will outline a few of these.

The 2011 announcement of the shipyards selected under the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy was an important milestone. We are proud to have delivered a fair, open, competitive and transparent approach for the largest procurement arrangement in Canadian history.

I am particularly pleased to note that in recognition of our work on the NSPS, the department received a 2012 Public Service Award of Excellence, as well as the 2012 bronze award for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration.

[English]

The Public Policy Forum declared this strategy the 2011 top public policy story of the year. I know my colleague, Tom Ring, appeared before this committee in recent days to discuss this work.

Our Canadian innovation commercialization program has helped Canadian businesses demonstrate their innovative products and services while also meeting the needs identified by federal departments and agencies. We are continuing on the renovations of the Parliament Buildings, with 15 projects delivered on time and on budget. Planning for the rehabilitation of the buildings in the parliamentary precinct is proceeding, including work on the East Block, the West Block, and the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

My colleague, Pierre-Marc Mongeau, will appear before you on December 13 to provide you with an update on these projects and associated costs.

[Translation]

We are working to bring 21st-century business solutions to government, by modernizing pay and pension services. More

specifically, we are consolidating pay administration services for public servants into a single pay centre in Miramichi, New Brunswick. This initiative consists of replacing the government's outdated 40-year-old pay system with more efficient and modern technology and will generate millions in annual savings.

[English]

In addition, we have put in place a department-wide client service strategy aimed at bringing a more consistent and disciplined approach to the provision of our wide range of services to client departments, big and small, across the government. As part of our commitment to transparency, I am pleased to say that these service standards are now publicly available through our website.

I would note that PWGSC has good results in the annual management accountability framework, or MAF. These are the assessments carried out by the Treasury Board. MAF is a key performance management tool that the federal government uses to support the management accountability of deputy heads and to improve management practices across government. Last year, of the eleven areas for which Public Works was assessed, we scored either acceptable, "green", or strong, "blue", in ten areas, with one area where an opportunity for improvement was noted.

Our most recent departmental performance report contains 27 performance indicator targets. Here I am excluding the three that are developed by the procurement ombudsman. We substantially met or exceeded 24 of them.

We are pleased to have accomplished this while building the reputation as a department to recruit and retain the workforce of the future. Our department was named one of the national capital region's top employers and one of Canada's best diversity employers in a single year.

Last night we took the Chair's Cup in the Government of Canada's annual charitable campaign, for our contribution of over \$1 million.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andrew Treusch: Thank you.

[Translation]

PWGSC remains focused on fiscal prudence and ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

[English]

In Budget 2012, PWGSC committed to \$177.6 million of reductions over seven years as part of the deficit reduction action plan. Most of the savings are from the modernization of government workspaces.

[Translation]

PWGSC has shown leadership in the area of sound financial management and has instilled a culture of budget management excellence throughout the various program branches. The department's forecasting accuracy between December 31 and year-end for the last two years exceeded 99%. This demonstrates a level of financial management discipline that goes beyond government and industry standards.

• (0900)

[English]

In addition, we have strengthened our oversight role in all financial matters. Rigorous practices have yielded economies and resulted in moneys returned to the fiscal framework. We have in place a number of strong policies, processes, and procedures to support fair, open, and transparent business practices. This is a continuous approach to ensure the highest level of accountability in the Government of Canada's procurement and real property systems.

We introduced in July an integrity framework to ensure we are doing business with organizations and individuals that respect the law. This is another step to increase our due diligence, reduce the opportunity for fraud, and better manage the reputational risk to the procurement and real property system.

[Translation]

Internally, we have a strong audit and evaluation function, and we launched a PWGSC Code of Conduct in April 2012, concurrent with the release of the new Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector.

[English]

I'm pleased to say that we have accomplished all of this while providing comprehensive support to our employees as we reduce the size of our workforce. Our department totalled around 12,200 employees in 2011-12. We experience considerable mobility, including some 500 of our employees who retire each year. Overall some 95% of the employees affected by the first and second year of the strategic review have secured alternate employment or have left the public service, typically for retirement. For the employees affected by the April 2012 implementation of the deficit reduction action plan, some 88% have already been placed or have left the public service, typically for retirement.

[Translation]

We have accomplished this largely through the efforts of our departmental priority placement process.

[English]

Thank you for your attention. My colleagues and I would be very happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Treusch. We appreciate that.

Now we will have questioning, beginning with Linda Duncan of the official opposition, the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing before us today.

My first question follows on your comment about the policy of fiscal prudence. We note that despite that, since 2006, the advertising expenditures for your department have done nothing but escalate. There are rumours that the department is considering reverting back to pre-Gomery and farming out to outside parties delivery of the advertising. I wonder if you could speak to that and to whether there is in place a fiscal prudence strategy that will soon be revealed on spending on things such as the economic action plan.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I don't think Public Works and Government Services Canada actually has an advertising campaign. I think the honourable member is referring to the Government of Canada's advertising campaign. Public Works does indeed have responsibilities here, so I well understand the question.

First of all, we're responsible for the media buy, and centralizing the media buy is a more cost-effective way for the government to achieve its publicity objectives. So we do have that responsibility. We have a second responsibility, which is to prepare an annual report on the Government of Canada's annual advertising campaign.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I noticed in your 2012-13 report on plans and priorities—and this keeps coming up in your reports—that on page 8 you talk about the role of Public Works in implementing the federal sustainable development strategy, part of which is greening government buildings. That effort is commendable, and our committee is looking forward to delving into that in greater detail a little later on.

One thing that puzzles me is that PCO has established its corporate management advisory committee to which departments can come and explain both the fiscal side of what they're doing and the legislative and policy implementation, but there have been some concerns in the audits of PCO that departments are not bringing in sufficiently detailed information about things, including costing.

I'm wondering if you could outline—and perhaps that's part of the problem—why your reports show no savings to the deficit resulting from a move to retrofit and make government buildings and facilities more energy efficient.

• (0905)

Mr. Andrew Treusch: We're quite proud of our leadership in green government operations under the umbrella of the government's sustainable development program. There is a theme, theme IV, on the greening of government operations. Public Works plays a lead role in the plans there. Our major efforts are focused on government buildings, along with fleet management, because government buildings account for about 80% of overall greenhouse gas emissions from the government sector.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I understand the program, sir. I'm asking, though, why there's no mention in the main estimates, the supplementaries, or the report on plans and priorities of any calculated savings from investing in greening those facilities.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: Our new buildings are built to LEED gold, and we also are able, in our major refits and in renovations as well, to extract energy savings and reduce greenhouse gas emissions there.

We're also reducing travel.

I will, if I may, now ask John McBain to elaborate on the answer. He is our ADM for real property.

Mr. John McBain (Assistant Deputy Minister, Real Property Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you for the opportunity.

We haven't identified a separate number in our reports; however, the savings that are realized from our greening operations are reflected in our annual ask for the operation of our inventory. As you know, part of our requests every year reflect changes in the costs of heating, cooling, and maintenance of our buildings, so each year it shows up more as something not asked—it is a cost avoidance. But it is not specifically targeted and carved out as a saving arriving from the implementation of these initiatives.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thanks, Mr. McBain.

Would it be possible to provide to the committee an overview over the last five years, say, and projected into the next five, of the energy savings that you forecast with the retrofit strategy?

Mr. John McBain: I will ask the branch and the various sectors to pull together the numbers that we can provide with respect to savings from our initiatives.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Duncan.

Thank you, Mr. McBain.

For the Conservatives, Mr. Jacques Gourde.

Five minutes, please, Jacques.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wish to thank the witnesses for being with us this morning. It is always a pleasure to have you here.

On page 6 of your presentation, you said, "PWGSC has put a number of strong policies, processes and procedures in place over the years to support fair, open and transparent business practices."

Could you expand on this statement?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: There are two things.

First, we are the major agent for the Government of Canada in procurement, so the lion's share of procurement runs through our department. Also, of course, we are the custodian of office buildings for the Government of Canada, so certainly we've always had integrity provisions associated with acquisition. We have, in the summer of this year, strengthened our integrity provisions to ensure, to the extent possible, that we are not engaging in business with companies that have serious criminal convictions.

We extended the list of offences that would render a company or an individual ineligible to bid on a contract to include money laundering, participation in criminal organizations, income or an excise tax evasion, bribing officials, and drug trafficking. These measures are now in effect, and we've extended them—they apply not only to our contracting, but to our major real property functions as well.

Finally, I would note that on contracting we also have introduced and have made great use of fairness monitors to oversee the major procurement. There is a third party outside the department, but contracted by us, to provide an outside assurance that a contracting procedure has been fair, open, and transparent, and to provide a report at the end of the process to attest to that.

● (0910)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You also stated that there had been 500 retirements annually at the department in recent years and a restructuring in order to deal with our deficit. From what you say, many positions and people were moved within the department. Some left and others lost their positions, but it remains that your placement rate is quite remarkable, that is, between 88% and 95%. So many people must have been able to find positions within or outside the department.

What did you do to ensure special attention for those people who had skills and who had lost their position, but whom you wanted to keep within the public service? It is important, when a lot of people are displaced, to keep those that have been trained over the years. Their skills have to be preserved. Tell me how you went about it.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I appreciate the question and this important opportunity to clarify something on which I can see there's some confusion in certain quarters.

It's very important that positions are eliminated under these restraint exercises. Under strategic review, and most recently under the deficit reduction action plan, we have eliminated positions. In the most recent exercise, 163 positions were eliminated.

In terms of the people occupying those positions, these people are called "affected" in the human resource jargon of government. We put in place a job placement team for these people, whereby we have offered them every possible opportunity to find gainful employment within our department, within the government, or, of course, if they're at retirement, to take advantage of retirement. They have other opportunities as well. I'm only highlighting the key ones.

Our management team focuses on these affected people every week. Every week we review the people we've placed and the people we've not placed, until we've worked it through.

Turning back to the strategic review and the statistics I mentioned, 95% of the people affected in those positions that were eliminated have been successfully placed: the majority within the department, many across other government departments, and some have taken retirement. I spoke about, and you quite rightly referenced, attrition. As our workforce turns over, as people go into retirement, it opens up 400 or 500 jobs each year, so we certainly have flexibility to move people in a way that respects the requirements of the position.

In the most recent round, which is the DRAP, we're getting close to having placed 90% of the 163 people who were in those affected positions.

The Chair: Thank you, Jacques. That concludes your time.

Next for the NDP is Jean-François Larose.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also wish to thank our guests for being with us today.

You often talk about strategy. I do not find this situation at all reassuring. I do not see any strategy in it. I see objectives and constraints that you have been saddled with. You do what you can in the circumstances, but the reality is that there is a lack of planning.

According to the government's news releases, the reductions under the 2012 budget should theoretically come from internal services. However, I note throughout the government and within your department, an increase in the estimates for program activities in the case of internal services. In light of the strategic review of the 2011 budget, the business review of the 2012 budget and the transfers to Shared Services Canada, I would have expected to see a reduction in such program activity.

Can you explain this increase to us?

• (0915)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: If I may, I'll answer this partly, and then I'll turn to the chief financial officer. Thank you very much for the question.

The reduction proposals under the DRAP process are generated by the department. They are submitted to our minister. She in turn takes them to cabinet and they're approved. Although financial targets are set by the government as a matter of government policy, the proposals are generated by us.

Our draft proposals largely fall into three large areas, and I'm accounting for almost all the reductions: first, modernization of the workplace; second, moving from cheques to direct deposit over the coming years; and third, reductions in internal services. Those three areas account for well over 90% of our whole package. It's fairly straightforward that way.

We've made many reductions in our internal costs. Our travel is down by millions of dollars. We have reduced the number of printers and computers per employee. We've taken software applications off our systems. We've reduced our hospitality expenditures. We've found a lot of small economies, which, while small, in total are important to the taxpayer.

If I may, I'll ask Alex to address our internal services.

Mr. Alex Lakroni (Chief Financial Officer, Finance Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): If I may, I would like to refer you to the DPR, page 8, where we have a performance summary for internal services. You will note that the actual spending in 2011-12 is \$338 million, which, if you compare it to 2010-11, is almost at the same level, because in 2010-11 we spent \$337 million.

One note I would add is that in the actual spending of 2011-12 it includes two things: it includes \$25 million for severance pay and parental leave that the government decided to pay to public servants who elect to receive their severance pay, and it includes \$20.5 million for the operating budget carry-forward.

I would like to say a few things about why the operating budget carry-forward is in our internal services. It is there as a cushion, because as Mr. Treusch mentioned, the department is heavy in terms of revenue dependence, and we have to carry an amount of money from year to year should the revenue decrease. So all in all, I think our internal services are at the right level.

If I may add as a last comment, we did an analysis in terms of where Public Works fits in comparison to the rest of government, and we figured that our internal services average 8%, in general, of our gross spending, while the rest of the government is at 13%. So I think we are a fairly efficient organization from the internal services perspective.

The Chair: Thank you.

One more minute, Jean-François.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Can you provide the committee with a breakdown, year after year, by program activity, of the budget estimates in relation to the department's actual spending? Could you clearly indicate where the reductions have been applied and provide a list of any frozen allotments related to the successive cuts?

[English]

The Chair: You have only a few seconds to answer the question, but you're welcome to try.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: We're happy to comply to any requests the committee makes. I know a member of the committee made such a request for this meeting, and we're quite prepared to respond to that in written form, which I think would largely satisfy. It does not deal with individual person movements, but we're happy to provide additional information in aggregate on the FTEs and the impacts of DRAP.

The Chair: I wonder if that could be done through the clerk, and then it could be distributed to committee members.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: If it's the will of the committee, certainly.

The Chair: That would be good. Thank you.

For the Conservatives, Mike Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today.

I really appreciate the associate deputy minister's explanation of how things actually work, where the direction is given to the departments on what numbers we need to achieve, but it's the departments who make the recommendations to the minister, he or she, on what programs need to change, where there are savings possibilities, and they bring that to cabinet for approval. It's not a top-down approach, but the management of government that brings forward the concept, the idea, as we set the direction. I really appreciate that explanation, which I've used many times at public meetings in my own riding.

I have a question about the actual estimates book that we have. Shared Services Canada is new; it keeps getting transfers from all the departments to fund it. Should I anticipate that this will continue, or are they getting their own money and the transfers will stop from departments? Are we going to still allocate it to departments for them to transfer over to Shared Services through these books, or will they get their own funding line?

● (0920)

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I will ask Alex to help me in replying.

Overall, Shared Services Canada gathered people and their base budget from some 43 or 44 departments, importantly, from Public Works. I believe initially, and it is shown in our documentation to Parliament, some 1,100 people were moved from Public Works to become the core of the new Shared Services Canada. That also involved a transfer of moneys as well.

Those have taken place already. Shared Services Canada is up and running effectively. It's operating as a separate entity within our portfolio, reporting to our minister. There will be, I'm sure, still some minor adjustments around the edges, but fundamentally it's there and in place.

I would add that Shared Services Canada will operate not unlike Public Works and Government Services Canada, in that some of their services will be provided on a cost-recovery basis to departments. So they will cost-recover some of their undertakings.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Will they have their own names? Will they have their own grouping?

Mr. Alex Lakroni: The answer is yes. I don't want to speak for Shared Services Canada, but my understanding is that it's out there. It's a department on its own, with all the authorities, and that means the estimates, supplementary estimates, public accounts, DPR, RPP, etc.

In terms of the second half of your question, regarding transfers from departments and whether that will end or not, I think the essence of the transfers occurred last year, so it's in their main estimates. As Mr. Treusch mentioned, there may be some adjustments down the road for departments that have certain negotiations in terms of resources being transferred. We know that Shared Services Canada will operate on a cost-recovery basis, so you will see departments paying fees to Shared Services Canada for services consumed, but we're not going to see the magnitude of transfers we saw last year.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you.

I'm going to do a little comparison of your PRs, your performance reports, and what you actually spent in 2011-12, based on the report I have in front of me, what your forecast spending was, and then what your planned spending is based on your plans and priorities document that you provided in March.

The one question I have for you that pops out is on linguistic management services. You guesstimated that you were going to spend.... You forecast \$78 million. You came in at \$74 million. Then in 2012-13 it pops up to \$80 million, and then in 2013-14 it pops down to \$65 million.

Can you explain why?

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I won't address the numbers, but I certainly can.... Forecasting translation demand is a bit like forecasting the weather, quite frankly. It's a demand-driven program, and you would know this as a parliamentarian. We're not really able to forecast when Parliament will sit, how many days it will sit, and how long the meetings will be. We're not always able to forecast with great accuracy the foreign delegations—

Mr. Mike Wallace: I understand that, but why then...? There's a significant change between planned spending for 2012-13—from \$80 million down to \$65 million in 2013-14. Are you doing something differently in terms of the program? The rest is about \$74 million, \$78 million, \$80 million—it's all in the same ballpark—and then it drops relatively significantly. Then it drops again the next year, another \$7 million.

Are you doing a new program? Are you doing something differently?

● (0925)

Mr. Andrew Treusch: No. That's an excellent question.

You're turning to 2012-13 over 2011-12 there?

Mr. Mike Wallace: So for 2011-12, which is actually in the bank, you spent \$74 million. You forecasted \$78 million. Then it goes up slightly for 2012-13 to \$80 million. It's on page 10 of your plans and priorities document. But then there's a decrease from \$80 million to \$65 million, and then it goes down to \$59 million.

Is something happening in linguistic services? Is there more computer-generated output? What's happening? Why the difference?

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I believe there are two factors there. First, there had been a program that was delivered through the Translation Bureau where scholarships and bursaries were provided. That program sunsetted and has ended. That accounts for the decline there.

Second, beyond Parliament, we are providing services to individual departments. They have an option to contract out translation services. We are finding that an increasing number of departments are using this alternative for their less sensitive translation services.

The Chair: You are over seven minutes already there, Mike, which is some kind of a record almost, actually. I've let you go over longer than anybody ever before.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I'll thank you all if I get another chance.

The Chair: You'll have to wait for next time.

We'll go to Kelly Block, please.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank our guests for being here today. I'm very pleased to have you here to testify before our committee.

I want to start by congratulating you on receiving—I'm going to go back to your notes—the 2012 public service award of excellence and the 2012 bronze award for innovative management from the Institute of Public Administration, as well as on being named both one of the national capital region's top employers and one of Canada's best diversity employers. I think this is something to celebrate, and I just wanted to repeat those accomplishments and get them on the record again.

You also said in your notes that PWGSC has shown leadership in the area of sound financial management and has instilled a culture of budget management excellence throughout the various program branches.

Earlier you talked a little bit about the department-wide client service strategy. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that, because it is aimed at bringing a consistent and disciplined approach to the provision of services. How many client departments are there? Tell me a little bit more about that strategy.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: Thank you very much for the kind remarks. They're much appreciated.

Thank you as well for the question.

Our department sees itself mainly as a service department, as a backbone for the Government of Canada. We serve literally all the departments, large and small, across the Government of Canada. Counting some of the small entities can be a bit of a chore, but you're talking about probably 125 or so, plus or minus 10, and we serve them all.

We have probably over 30 main business lines. We're known for real property, and we're known for acquisition, but we have over 30 different business lines across the government. Since we depend upon these departments, it's important to us that we put in place a very strong client service strategy. It starts with having service standards. We've set for ourselves client service standards that we can be measured against. We've done that for two years now, and in our second year we're able to report not just on the standards but on our results against the standards. We reset the standards. In the vast majority of cases, we've raised the bar; we've increased the standards. That's the core of it.

We have a whole new generation of service agreements with our client departments, so they know our expectations. That's another key piece.

We're renewing our competencies so that when we staff, we put client service at the heart of our staffing function. We're training our employees in client service, and we have a barometer; we have a way of gauging the relationship we have and the satisfaction of our clients.

We have a pretty comprehensive client strategy, and we're quite proud of it.

● (0930)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

I have two minutes. I don't know that I'm going to take all of that up.

You also noted in your opening remarks that PWGSC has had very good results in the annual management accountability framework assessments, and you said those were carried out by the Treasury Board portfolio. Can you explain that for me? Is that someone independent from your department? Who actually conducts those assessments?

Mr. Andrew Treusch: For organizations, probably the most comprehensive assessment of the quality of management of a department is these annual assessments by the Treasury Board Secretariat. So they are indeed done externally. They have a set of indicators—and I've lost count, but there might be 80 or 90 separate indicators, with a lot of documentation, quite frankly—that they ask of us. They rate us on all of the areas that constitute good management practices, and they do that each year. That report is publicly available. It's posted on the website of the Treasury Board Secretariat.

When I say the Treasury Board Secretariat, I should elaborate. That includes their human resources people. They're actually reviewing the way we manage our human resource responsibilities. As well, the Comptroller General looks more at the handiwork of my colleague Alex in terms of rigorous financial management. It's quite comprehensive, and those reports are publicly posted.

Three or four years ago we were not in such a great place. We had a lot of areas for improvement, as it would say on my report card when I went to school. So we've been very focused on improving our performance, and we've had good results.

The Chair: Thank you, Kelly. That does use up your time.

We're going to Denis Blanchette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for being with us this morning.

A little earlier, in response to a question from my colleague, you said you had a proposal of your own with a view to contributing to deficit reduction and the strategic review.

Since the government asks you to make efforts year after year and is going to ask you to do so next year, I wonder whether you have an overall plan for a certain number of years with a view to coping with these requests.

I also wonder why this element, which, it must be said, gives rise to major costs and mobilizes a lot of resources on the part of your department, is not in itself an element in the 2012–13 Report on Plans and Priorities. It seems to me that the scope of government requests would justify the existence of a special section in this report.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: To clarify, the responsibility of departments and myself is to make recommendations to government—the decisions are made by government. We offer advice. The minister makes a recommendation, cabinet approves it, and then we execute the decisions.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: But we are really talking about your own expenditures. I imagine that, as a rule, any proposals pertaining to your department are approved by Treasury Board. I would be surprised if you were often contradicted in this regard.

I would like to know whether you have an overall plan that enables you to deal with this type of request and not have to respond differently from one year to the next.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: In the time available, I want to underscore that these plans I am referring to are longer-term plans. The strategic review exercise was for three-year plans being implemented. The deficit reduction action plan now being executed by PWGSC on the real property side is a seven-year plan. It's a longer-term transformational plan. In addition, in other areas, you may recall I referenced the transformation we're doing in the delivery of pay and of pensions. These are longer-term plans. Although we have many reporting requirements where we come to you quarterly or annually, we are executing our milestones in longer-term plans, sir. So all of these savings initiatives are indeed the kinds of transformational longer-term efforts....

● (0935)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: I understand what you are saying, but I am asking the question because I am trying to better understand exactly how the department copes with constraints. You have estimates. We are somewhat familiar with them, but we would like to know a lot more. That is what I am trying to tell you. We would like to know a bit more about your long-term proposals, find out what direction you are taking and how that affects the services you offer.

One has to be honest here. You are reducing staff, but these people were not sitting and twiddling their thumbs. There may be productivity gains or technological improvements here and there, but the staff reductions requested of you are greater than the overall productivity gains. We also want to know what impact this will have on your day-to-day activities, what you have to sacrifice when it comes to translation, property management and so on.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Treusch: I'll try to deal with two sides of the question.

First of all, on our long-term plans in reductions, the numbers we have put out, which are a matter of public record—and I would be happy to share them with the committee—show the savings going out seven years. Those are the measures I was trying to summarize for the committee. The modernization of the workplace and the moving to direct deposit and internal economies—all of these numbers are available and are a matter of public record over seven years. So that's our planning horizon.

In terms of the people, I would say we've been quite successful, as I was indicating earlier, in placing the people who have been affected. Most of them have already been placed. We still have some to worry about, but over 95% of people from strategic review and 88% of people from DRAP have already been placed.

Your question, sir, is about the impact on services. I don't think services to Canadians have been materially affected. I think we've been able to meet these targets by being more efficient in the way we're delivering the services.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thank you, gentlemen.

Our next questioner is Peter Braid from the Conservatives.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our PWGSC officials for being here this morning.

Mr. Treusch, first things first: the Chair's Cup. Tell us a little bit about that.

Mr. Andrew Treusch: Thank you so much. I have here one of our co-champions to lead the campaign.

First of all, it should be the public service in the national capital region; they raised over \$21.4 million in the charitable campaign. That was announced last night. Our department raised over \$1 million. We exceeded our campaign target, which was \$925,000.

In this climate of fiscal restraint, and at a time when our department transferred a thousand employees to Shared Services Canada, we were a little anxious about being able to raise \$1 million. But we were able to do so, and we're quite proud of that.

I thank you for the question.

Mr. Peter Braid: Congratulations on that accomplishment. Clearly the United Way campaign here in Ottawa—and the wider community as a result—benefits from the generosity of federal employees. PWGSC is clearly a leader in that regard. Well done.

Turning to your presentation, I'd like to hear more about the client service strategy you have established and implemented. Could you tell us a bit more about what drove the implementation of that strategy, whether other government departments have similar strategies, or perhaps whether you're leading the way and other departments may follow in this regard?

● (0940)

Mr. Andrew Treusch: Thank you very much for the question.

Going back, I think we've always been a service organization. It's in our parliamentary mandate. It's in the legislation of Parliament. That's what we're constituted...along with a recognition of the fact that now a majority of our revenue comes from clients.

We live in a marketplace, sir. If we're not able to provide good service to client departments, then we will not be able to maintain that service line. We need to focus on client service. The client service strategy was the umbrella to bring this together for the department.

The department has, as I mentioned, with the very diversity of our service lines—some 30 different service lines—a vast regional network. We needed to have a very coherent and strong service strategy that affected the whole department, across all the service lines, with all our undertakings. The service strategy was the way of doing that.

I would say that at the heart of it is setting rigorous service standards, and these, sir, are standards that can be measured. It's just pass-fail—you met it or you didn't—and not those fine words. We now use that to report on the results and then recalibrate.

We did miss some of our standards, but that's the way it's designed to work. That's a warning sign to us that we need to improve, we need to up our game, and that's the way we're driving improvement there.

It has also established that the most important thing between a service provider and a client is the relationship. It's engaging the client, understanding their needs, and the client believing you're doing everything possible to help them meet their business needs. The client service strategy is built around that.

We are a leader in this kind of strategy for a department of our type. I would give recognition to Service Canada as being the first entity in the government that obviously had service delivery to citizens at their centre, but many departments have service strategies relevant to their mandate.

Mr. Peter Braid: Similarly, are PWGSC employees measured on the same performance indicators as the departments?

Mr. Andrew Treusch: As I briefly alluded to earlier, we are introducing competencies in all of our staffing procedures. As we recruit and as we consider people for promotion, competency in client service is an important part of it. It is the missing piece of the puzzle that we're just now building in as part of the strategy.

Frankly, beyond that, though, we hold our managers rigorously to account for client service delivery. When we sit down, as deputy, with our branch lines, and we go through the results, we are using that to hold ourselves to account.

I think my colleagues here can attest that it's a very meaningful accountability mechanism that we take very seriously.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thank you.

Mr. Peter Braid: Do I have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): No, but thank you very much.

That's our time. We've got about one minute left. I want to thank our officials from Public Works and Government Services for coming. It was a great discussion. I may send you a few questions of my own later. We hope to see you again.

I'll suspend for a minute while we switch over to the Privy Council and the Transportation Safety Board.

• (0940) _____ (Pause) _____

• (0945)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): We are back in session.

We have a little committee business to take care of at the end of the meeting, so if we use up all our time, we may shut this down with about 10 minutes left to deal with a couple of items, including votes on the supplementary estimates (B).

I think Madame Doucet from the Privy Council Office is going to lead the charge with her presentation.

The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michelle Doucet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services, Privy Council Office): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, everyone.

I am pleased to meet with the members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Today, I am accompanied by Wilma Vreeswijk, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Business Transformation and Renewal Secretariat, by Ian McCowan, Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Communications and Consultations, and by Marc Belisle, Executive Director of the Finance and Corporate Planning Division for the Privy Council Office.

My introductory comments pertain to the 2012-13 supplementary estimates (B) for the Privy Council Office, or PCO. In these estimates, PCO is seeking \$4.8 million for various items, which I will explain without further preamble.

[*English*]

An amount of \$1.3 million is for the government-wide coordination of the perimeter security and economic competitiveness action plan. On February 4, 2011, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and U.S. President Barack Obama issued a declaration on a shared vision for perimeter security and economic competitiveness. The declaration establishes a new long-term partnership that will accelerate the legitimate flow of people and goods between both countries, while strengthening security and economic competitiveness.

On December 7, 2011, both leaders agreed to implement two action plans designed to speed up legitimate trade and travel, improve security in North America, and align regulatory approaches between the two countries. Following this announcement, a small team was established within PCO to oversee Canada's implementation of the border action plan and to ensure close, regular, and routine communication, coordination, and consultation with the White House national security staff who oversee the U.S. implementation. Funding of \$1.3 million is sought for the operation of the border implementation team within PCO.

The amount of \$2.1 million is to support the ongoing work of the U.S.-Canada Regulatory Cooperation Council, the RCC, which was created following the agreement between the leaders on December 7, 2011. The RCC is an initiative that brings together senior representatives of the governments of Canada and the United States under a two-year mandate to increase regulatory cooperation between the two countries. The RCC joint action plan is an important step in the ongoing process of regulatory cooperation between Canada and the United States. Joint action plan work is being undertaken in the areas of agriculture and food, transportation, health and personal care products, workplace chemicals, the environment, and two cross-sectoral areas—nanotechnology and the view from the small business perspective.

PCO's work in this area is new since we last appeared before the committee. Originally, the Canadian secretariat to the RCC was hosted by the Treasury Board Secretariat, TBS. TBS had received funding in the amount of \$3.3 million—and that excludes employee benefit plans and Public Works and Government Services accommodation costs—in fiscal year 2012-13 for the Canadian RCC secretariat. The Prime Minister announced in July 2012 that the secretariat was transferred to PCO effective August 1, 2012, under the leadership of David Moloney, who is also directing the border implementation team of which I just spoke. Therefore, TBS transferred the remaining 2012-13 funding in the amount of \$2.1 million to allow PCO to house the operation of the RCC secretariat. As a result, this is not new money and there is no new impact on the fiscal framework for these funds.

The amount of \$1.4 million is to support operational activities at the Business Transformation and Renewal Secretariat, BTRS, in supporting the priorities and planning subcommittee on government administration as it pursues government-wide opportunities for improved services and operational efficiencies. To this end, the new secretariat is working with departments and agencies to find whole-of-government solutions that improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of the government. It is also continuing the work of public service renewal and supporting the clerk as the head of the public service.

Funding included in these estimates is not a new draw on the fiscal framework, since funds are transferred from existing reference levels of 25 departments in 2012-13 and from 27 departments for future years. The remaining funding for the operation of the new secretariat will come from the former public service renewal secretariat, which had been housed within PCO's senior personnel group, but which has been moved to the new secretariat.

● (0950)

[Translation]

A total of \$1.3 million is to continue to support the coordination of government-wide communications for Canada's Economic Action Plan. The action plan, or EAP, was first introduced in response to an unprecedented global recession. Given global economic uncertainty, the government is continuing to implement the economic action plan to help ensure a strong, stable economy for all Canadians.

Budget 2012 emphasized the priority placed on the economy in the overall government agenda, with the focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. The EAP Web site was redesigned to focus on

jobs and growth, and to ensure that Canadians are aware of EAP initiatives and how these initiatives apply to them.

The EAP team within PCO continues to support the coordination of a government-wide communications strategy for the EAP. The strategy serves to provide Canadians with access to evergreen information on more than 275 federal programs, services and initiatives announced in federal budgets, from a single Web portal rather than the individual Web sites of almost 40 departments and agencies.

On a day-to-day basis, the team is responsible for ensuring the EAP Web site is as evergreen as possible, using social media to highlight initiatives of interest to Canadians. This requires active, regular contact with departments and agencies to ensure projects are added to the EAP project map, initiatives and priorities are up to date, and job- and growth-related news releases are posted on the site.

● (0955)

[English]

The amount of \$0.3 million is for the completion of the activities of the commission of inquiry into the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. The commission generated a surplus of \$1.6 million in 2011-12, which is mostly explained by the extensions granted to the commissioner to submit his final report from June 30, 2012, to the end of October 2012. As you may recall, PCO sought an amount of \$1.3 million in the 2012-13 supplementary estimates (A), which was a re-profile of a proportion of the commission's 2011-12 surplus to the current fiscal year.

However, since then, the commissioner extended the contracts for council and legal research assistants and increased their hours as a result of the scale of the task of writing the report. In late April, additional activities resulted from one of the participants requesting that the hearings be reopened to consider alleged evidence of disease in store-bought farmed salmon. Furthermore, the commission needed to review Bill C-38 for implications on the commission's work. The funding sought in these estimates, \$0.3 million, is also re-profiled for the remaining balance of the commission's 2011-12 surplus to the current fiscal year. On October 31, 2012, the report was officially released to the public, and the commission is in the process of winding down its office. It will be officially wound down by December 31, 2012.

The amount of \$0.1 million is transferred from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, DFAIT, related to the Canada-Australia exchange program. For 2012-13, PCO had transferred funds to DFAIT for a new two-year assignment, which will now not be necessary as the program is under review and is expected to be reconfigured to have shorter assignments. Therefore, DFAIT is returning the funds for the portion of the year for which there will be no new departmental staff at missions abroad.

These increases are partially offset by \$1.3 million in savings, as announced in Budget 2012. To achieve the ongoing savings, PCO will change the way we work in some significant ways, some of which I've highlighted more specifically for you in previous appearances. The federal-provincial territorial functions will be further integrated within PCO, and a new secretariat has been established. This will allow us to minimize overlap and duplication between elements of intergovernmental affairs and the other PCO secretariats.

The cabinet system is being streamlined. We are taking measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making that will result in a reduced workload. One example of this is the new format for memoranda to cabinet. The government communications function is being modernized and streamlined, including a new approach to media monitoring and analysis. The corporate services branch is reviewing its business practices to optimize efficiencies, and all other branches are also finding ways to modernize their business processes and to achieve administrative efficiencies to meet savings targets.

In addition to the reductions announced in Budget 2012, this fiscal year, \$0.5 million in savings has been further identified in the day-to-day operations of the Prime Minister's office and is being returned to the fiscal framework.

In closing, I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to inform you of the ongoing initiatives in the PCO's 2012-13 supplementary estimates (B). We would be pleased to respond to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thank you, Ms. Doucet.

We're also joined by the chair of the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, Wendy Tadros.

Do you have an opening statement?

Mrs. Wendy Tadros (Chair, Transportation Safety Board of Canada): We have no opening statement, Mr. Chairman, but we'd be pleased to answer any questions from the committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): That's fantastic.

We'll start with questions, then. Our first questioner is Ms. Linda Duncan from the NDP.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first questions will be to the Transportation Safety Board. I'm well aware of the value of your work, having suffered through the largest freshwater spill in history, at Lake Wabamun.

My concern goes to the move for fiscal austerity and the ability for continued program integrity. I've looked through all the reports by the Transportation Safety Board, the report on plans and priorities,

the strategic plan, the supplementary (B) estimates, and so forth. I'm reading—either it's forthright or between the lines—some concerns expressed by the Transportation Safety Board, and I think they are deserved.

You've reported that approximately 20% of rail staff in rail investigations will be eligible to retire within 24 months. Then, in your strategic plan, you state a concern with the high number of staff retirements. You have a concern that with the need to keep pace with the changes in industry, you will need to operate within limited resources to effectively deliver your tasks. You also reported, in plans and priorities, significant decreases in pipeline investigations over the next three years, which seems a little puzzling given the mounting concern by the public with the age of pipelines and potential accidents. Then you express that you are not able to meet half of your air investigations on time.

Could you speak to whether or not you have any concerns with...? Has PCO actually done a careful review of whether you're going to be able to deliver these critical services to Canadians within these cuts?

I have a second question for you, but I see that the bells are ringing.

• (1000)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): That's just the start of Parliament.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay. You can answer within this timeframe.

I found something very puzzling in the supplementary (B) estimates. I went through the main estimates for the Transportation Safety Board and supplementaries (A) and (B). For the mains and supplementary (A), we have continued the exact same amount, \$26 million...almost \$480,000 for program expenditures. Then, mysteriously, in supplementary (B), we have \$28 million-plus, and yet there's no transfer and no adjustment. I'm wondering if you could explain where that total comes from. It looks like somebody must have decided to give you a bit more money, but where it comes from is not clear.

I wonder if you could also speak to the concerns raised in your various reports, and how we can maintain program integrity for a service that frankly the public very much values.

Mrs. Wendy Tadros: Okay. I'll start out with the overview, and I'll ask Mr. Laporte, the chief operating officer, to address the question you have on the two figures.

In terms of the overview, we're confident that even with the cuts that were made to the organization, we will be able to deliver fully on our mandate. One of the issues that we do have and that we have had in the last couple of years is turnover of staff. That's a particular problem for us because these are highly trained individuals. We cannot staff those positions the way you can with some administrative jobs. We're looking for highly qualified individuals. That's been a challenge for the organization, but it's a challenge that I feel we are meeting.

That's the overview. I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Laporte to discuss the two figures you raised.

Mr. Jean Laporte (Chief Operating Officer, Transportation Safety Board of Canada): In terms of the supplementary estimates (B), that's where the difference is included between the two numbers that you've referred to, the \$26 million and the \$28 million. In the supplementary estimates (B), we are receiving some funds that are being transferred from Treasury Board votes. It's not funding that we have specifically requested through supplementary estimates, but it's vote transfers from the Treasury Board votes. That includes the carry-forward of previous years' lapses in the amount of \$1.3 million, the compensation adjustment for collective bargaining of \$200,000, and pay-list requirements, which is an allocation to cover maternity allowances and severance pay, for another \$200,000. That adds up to the \$1.7 million difference that you referred to.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I understand, but I don't understand why the report shows no transfer. But perhaps you can explain that in a bit.

• (1005)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thirty seconds.

Ms. Linda Duncan: We're now planning to be shipping bitumen through rail lines that are intended for gasoline products. I would have thought that there would be some interest in gearing up and hiring more Transportation Safety Board people to give assurance and direction, to be building on inspection. Are you not making any request along that line?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Can you answer that in 10 seconds or so?

Mrs. Wendy Tadros: We are an investigative body. The inspections are done by Transport Canada, which is the regulator for transportation, including rail. If there are derailments of those shipments, then we are fully capable of investigating and reporting to the Canadian public on what happened and why, and what needs to be done to improve the system. So I'm confident in that area.

I will go back to your point on pipelines. We've had very few pipeline accidents in this country, thankfully.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Okay. Thank you.

The next questioner is Jacques Gourde from the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wish to thank the witnesses for joining us this morning. This is really very interesting.

In the 2012-13 supplementary estimates (B), the Privy Council is requesting \$1.25 million to support government-wide coordination

of the implementation of the Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action Plan.

What is the total amount sought to date with respect to the security action plan and what is the role of the Privy Council with respect to this plan?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Doucet: The role of the Privy Council Office in implementing the perimeter security and economic competitiveness action plan is to act as the house for the whole-of-government initiative on behalf of the Canadian government. As I stated in my opening remarks, it has two parts. There is, of course, the implementation of the border action plan, and that's being done by a small group of folks who are working out of the Privy Council Office, led by David Moloney. They are responsible for overseeing a coordinated and timely implementation of the action plan commitments across the Government of Canada among the responsible departments and agencies, and then also coordinating that with the United States, and obviously reporting on the progress that's being made on those commitments.

PCO is requesting for this year, for that portion of the exercise, \$1.4 million. That funding will be used mainly for salaries, professional services, travel, and other administrative costs.

The other portion of the work that's being done by this group is, of course, the work of the RCC, which is also being led under the leadership of David Moloney. And the two groups are housed in the same secretariat as the Privy Council Office. I'd be pleased to speak to that work if so asked.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Are there any concerns regarding this plan and, if so, what are they?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Obviously, Mr. Moloney would be better placed to speak to the details of the work, but it's my understanding that this work is going well and is on track and on plan. Today, Mr. Moloney is in Washington, meeting with his American counterparts, as he does on a regular basis.

To give you a sense of how that work is going, I'll speak a bit to the other side of the house, the RCC work. They're finalizing the action plan, with corresponding detailed work plans, and the implementation is now under way through 12 binational working groups. Those work plans were just finalized through the course of the summer, and they'll extend out over the next 18 months and beyond. The focus is on ongoing systemic changes, and that work will be critical to securing a new regulatory relationship with the United States and establishing new cooperative arrangements between regulatory departments in key areas of regulatory business, such as standard setting, product review and approvals, reliance on each other's regulatory systems, and in managing third-country import risk.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thank you very much.

Our next questioner is Denis Blanchette from the NDP.

• (1010)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for being here. It is always a pleasure to see you again. Welcome.

My question is for Ms. Vreeswijk.

You are asking for \$1.4 million for your activities, in addition to transfers of funds. It is said that your objective is to seize government-wide opportunities with a view to improving services. Talk to me a little more about your mandate. It is rather vague. Considering that it is a horizontal function and that the public administration is more or less in a period of cuts, I would like you to give me more details about your role.

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk (Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Business Transformation and Renewal Secretariat, Privy Council Office): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The role of the secretariat that I lead is to provide advice to the clerk and to the Prime Minister in terms of whole-of-government transformation. Since Budget 2010, Budget 2011, and Budget 2012, the government has placed a great deal of emphasis on whole-of-government initiatives to standardize, consolidate, and re-engineer government operations.

This work builds on that effort. In this regard, the government announced in September that it was going to create the planning and priorities subcommittee of cabinet with a view to improve effectiveness and efficiency of government operations. The role my team plays is to support this.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: In this case, is it strictly a matter of efficiency or do you also take into account the reductions that might be applied within the public administration?

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: Our focus is on effectiveness and efficiency, but with a view to improve services and reduce costs. It is a focus on transformation at the whole-of-government level. It's also with a view to improving outcomes and service.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: You are asking for \$1.4 million. What are you going to do with this money? What is your game plan for developing your organization?

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: The role the secretariat plays is very similar to other secretariats within the Privy Council Office. It is to provide secretariat support to the cabinet subcommittee on planning and priorities.

In addition, my team supports the clerk in terms of public service renewable. This means looking at the trends and challenges facing the public service and supporting the public service in terms of continued excellence into the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: What does this involve exactly: analyses, studies, joint action?

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: When I say secretariat support, it can be everything from providing advice to working with departments to ensure that the proposals they bring forward are well-founded and well-supported. It goes right through to agenda development, minutes, and things like that.

We also support the clerk as he does his annual report to the Prime Minister each year. We also support the Prime Minister's advisory committee in their deliberations.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Will it go so far as to suggest a transformation of the public administration?

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: As I said, the focus is on improved effectiveness and efficiency. Within the context of a cabinet committee, there are proposals that would be brought forward, and we would provide advice on these.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: I see.

How much time do I have left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): One minute.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: In connection with this joint action, I would like to know how you see your work with the other central agencies, especially Treasury Board and Public Works Canada, with a view to achieving the efficiency you are aiming for.

• (1015)

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: Much like the other secretariats within the Privy Council Office, we work very closely with other central agencies to assess the initiatives that are coming forward and to provide advice on them. We work with agencies such as Public Works and Government Services or Shared Services Canada, because they have a whole-of-government focus.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Very good.

[English]

Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk: We do work with them quite closely. The primary focus is on whole-of-government transformation, and this work is just getting started.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): That's it. Thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Costas Menegakis from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to our witnesses for appearing before us today.

I'd like to channel my questions. My first question deals with the perimeter security and economic competitiveness action plan and how it relates to our communication with the U.S. and the White House. Is PCO the lead vehicle in communicating our progress with respect to the security agreement with the U.S.?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Insofar as it pertains to the implementation of the action plan announced on December 7, 2011, PCO has the lead in government, but it works very closely with its security and border counterparts across government, and they have a critical role. For instance, Mr. Moloney, who is the deputy minister in charge of the initiative at PCO, chairs a deputy ministers' committee within the government, and the membership is what you would expect for the security and border departments in the Government of Canada. They also deal with their counterparts on the American side.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Does that communication include progress with specific items in the security agreement, such as the electronic travel authorization, biometrics, that type of thing?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I'm afraid I don't have that level of detail with me here today, but if the committee would like, I'd be pleased to provide it.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: That would be useful. You could provide it to the clerk.

Does the U.S. have a reciprocal group that gives us information with respect to what they're doing?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes, they do. There are two counterparts on the American side. With respect to the RCC component of the work, their counterpart is the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, which is where the U.S. side of the RCC is housed. The border action plan is done, as I understand it, directly out of the White House.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I'll flip to PCO's role in the coordination throughout the government of the economic action plan. A lot of the money you're asking for has gone towards the building of the new website, particularly the evergreen initiative, to make sure it goes out.

How are you communicating that to the other departments within the government?

Mr. Ian McCowan (Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Communications and Consultations, Privy Council Office): The website is the focus of the supplementary (B) request, and it represents an effort on the part of PCO to coordinate government communications on the initiatives related to the economic action plan. To do that, we need a small team to knit together information on more than 275 programs, services, and initiatives. Almost 40 government departments and agencies are involved in that effort, and this allows us to communicate in the most consistent and effective way possible and get maximum value on the investment.

The site allows us to provide one-stop shopping for important information on things like apprenticeship grants and hiring credits for small businesses. There's a blog. I think the most recent blog discusses how to save money on your energy bill over the holiday season, reinforcing energy efficiency themes.

The short answer to your question is that it's our best effort to provide coordinated, efficient, and effective communications for the many initiatives related to the economic action plan.

• (1020)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace): Thank you, Costas.

Our next questioner is John McCallum from the Liberal Party.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you.

Welcome to you all.

One of the things I've been trying to do with different departments that have come before us is to find out the true facts on the budget cuts that have come out of Budget 2012. In the case of PCO, I'll just quote what you say:

PCO will achieve Budget 2012 savings of \$9.2M by fiscal year 2014-2015 through efficiency measures that align resources to its core mandate; scaling back where the need is reduced; transforming how it works internally and by consolidating and streamlining. With these changes, PCO will focus on supporting management excellence and accountability across government.

With all due respect, that's sort of gobbledygook. That doesn't tell us anything at all. So I guess my question to you is how, in concrete terms, are you achieving the \$9.2 million of savings? What jobs are lost, and what are you not doing that you used to do? Do you have some answer that goes beyond the words that I just read?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

One of the important things to understand about the Privy Council Office is that we're all people. We don't have any programs. We have three main roles: to provide advice to the Prime Minister, to support cabinet and cabinet committees, and to support the clerk in his role as the head of the public service. So we're not, as part of our planned savings, cutting programs, because we don't have any programs to cut. We're seeking efficiencies, and wherever possible we're trying to do that without an impact on people, though that is unavoidable.

Hon. John McCallum: But how can you do it without an impact on people when all you have is people?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: We can't. So there has been an impact on people, and as a result we've had to invoke the workforce adjustment policy and directive. I believe I advised the committee that we had done that when I appeared before you on April 30 on our main estimates. We'd be pleased to give you further details on that today if you're interested in that.

Hon. John McCallum: I'm interested in...I think you call it program activities and subactivities. I'm interested in knowing what you've actually done, because those words that I read don't really tell us anything. How many people have lost their jobs, or what areas have you cut back in?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I certainly can speak to your question on program subactivities. The question about how many people have lost their jobs has a bit of a separate answer. Perhaps I'll start with the subactivity question first.

Hon. John McCallum: Okay.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: As you may know, the Privy Council Office published its planned savings under Budget 2012 by its five program activities on our website recently.

Because we're a smaller department, we have fewer subactivities than other departments to support the core mandate. It's actually easier for us than for some other departments to break that down along the subactivity level. But I can do that. Let me take you through that for over the next three years.

We have five subactivities. The first one, the Prime Minister's and portfolio ministers' support and advice, is the largest category; it has five subactivities. The first one is issues, policy, machinery, and appointments. This year, in 2012, we will save \$164,000. Next year that ramps up to \$461,000, and then in 2014-15 and thereafter it's \$923,000.

The second subactivity is international affairs and national security. This year we will save \$246,000. Next year that will ramp up to \$632,000, and then in 2014-15 and thereafter it's \$1.069 million.

In intergovernmental affairs we are not booking any savings for this year; they start next year. That's \$326,000, and then it ramps up for the third year and thereafter at \$977,000.

The fourth subactivity in this category is legislation, parliamentary issues, and democratic reform. There are no savings booked for this year, but they begin in the next fiscal year at \$54,000 and ramp up to \$162,000 ongoing.

The fifth subactivity is the Prime Minister's and portfolio ministers' offices. No savings are booked for this year or for the next fiscal year. They begin in 2014-15 and ongoing at \$416,000.

Let me turn next to the second activity level, which is cabinet and cabinet committees' advice and support. That has two subactivity levels. The first is operation of cabinet committees. This year we've booked \$86,000, and it ramps up significantly next year to \$845,000, and then finishing out at \$911,000 ongoing.

For PCO's work and integration across the federal government, which is the second subactivity in this category, this year we will save \$103,000, and next year we will save \$309,000. Then in 2014-15 it will be \$744,000 ongoing.

• (1025)

The Chair: I'm afraid I'm going to have to interrupt you. We are well over the time allocated to Mr. McCallum's questions.

We will now move on to the Conservatives and Mr. Ron Cannan.

If we could, we'll keep the questions and answers within the five minutes. As Mr. Wallace said, we have to save some time at the end of the meeting to actually vote on the questions put to the committee regarding the estimates.

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): I'll be very quick.

Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our witnesses.

Just to clarify, did you say the PCO had no programs?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: That's correct.

Hon. Ron Cannan: In your report you talk about Mr. Cohen's commission of inquiry on the decline of sockeye salmon coming from British Columbia. It's good to see that extensive report. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on which way you look at it, it is an issue with no silver bullet or quick fix. It's a complex solution.

I just want to know how this additional \$300,000 request compares to the estimate and what the final cost of the inquiry is.

Mr. Marc Bélisle (Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Planning Division, Privy Council Office): Thank you for your question.

As you know, the \$300,000 that we are asking for is not for new money. It is a re-profiling from last year's surplus, which was about \$1.6 million. In total, the Cohen commission has always mentioned there would be around \$26.4 million in their total budget. Taking into consideration all of their actuals at this point, and this forecast, they are going to be remaining within that same envelope.

Hon. Ron Cannan: What controls do you have in place once a prime minister initiates an inquiry? Do you have much control over the timeline and cost, or do you basically have to let due process unfold?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Perhaps I will speak to the timeline, and then Mr. Bélisle can speak to the cost controls.

On the timeline, Privy Council Office itself does not drive that. It's the head of every commission of inquiry who drives that, so in this case, Justice Cohen. Privy Council Office really doesn't have much say in that. Our role is to support the creation and back-office running of commissions of inquiry, which is where the second part of your question comes in.

Mr. Bélisle.

Mr. Marc Bélisle: All of the financial controls that we normally have in place for the PCO are also there for the commission, to make sure that all the proper authorities are in place before any payments are made. It's left to the liberty of the commissioner to decide what he needs to be able to operate, but these are done within the confinements and the rules and regulations of government.

Hon. Ron Cannan: It's important to stress that it's an independent and thorough investigation. Thanks.

Going to the RCC, the Regulatory Cooperation Council, I know that Minister Ritz recently made the wise decision to defer and go for further consultation on the food processing for container size. Will that affect your budget at all? Is that \$2.1 million that you have in there just for the departmental...or would each department, like agriculture, have a separate budget for their consultation process?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: The work that Minister Ritz will do will be supported by his department and its funding structure.

The funding for the RCC that is being transferred to the Privy Council Office in these estimates is to specifically support the secretariat function and the folks at the PCO who are doing that work. They have about 16 folks over there who are supporting all of the coordination across government, the relationship with the working groups that I talked about earlier, the relationship with the multiplicity of stakeholders across the country, and obviously the relationship with our American counterparts.

So the money that the PCO is requesting in these supplementary estimates (B) is to support the work of the Privy Council Office's secretariat. The work that departments are doing in support of the initiative is done within their appropriations.

• (1030)

Hon. Ron Cannan: As a member of the executive of the Canada-U.S. committee, I've been to a session in Oregon and last summer in Atlantic City, and what I've seen is there's been great cooperation between the CBSA and the Department of Homeland Security.

From your administration's perspective, how do you see us moving forward? Are we on time? Is it working as well as we had hoped, and what stage are we at as far as implementing the harmonization regulations is concerned?

The Chair: A very brief answer, please, Ms. Doucet.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Again, Mr. Maloney would be better placed to give you a progress report on that, but my understanding, from conversations with him and with the ADMs who support him, is that work is going very well, that it is on track, and that significant progress has been made to further both action plans.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cannan. That concludes your five minutes.

Jean-François Larose, for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Do you have a target, as far as savings are concerned, in connection with the transformation you are making?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question.

I can talk about the PCO.

[English]

I can speak about workforce adjustment in terms of impacts on employees, if the committee would like me to do that.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Sure.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: As we said earlier, Budget 2012 has a three-year timeframe. The primary tool for achieving a smaller workforce, which is what we're doing at the Privy Council Office in order to achieve those savings, is to use the workforce adjustment policy and directives. That policy has a 16-month implementation tail. There are other methods of finding reductions—not staffing after folks leave, eliminating vacant and funded positions. Our primary tool these days is to implement WFA. That's being implemented over a staggered timeframe. It will likely take us until March 31, 2014, to have the final picture. The best way to keep track of the actual spending, in terms of impact on appropriations, will be

through the quarterly reports, which will show the reductions once employees have left PCO.

When I came before the committee on April 30, I said we had just begun to implement workforce adjustment at the Privy Council Office. At that time I told the committee we had given 139 employees notices that their jobs might be affected. I also said to the committee at that time that we estimated having to declare surplus somewhere between 90 to 100 employees, but I put a strong caveat around those numbers to allow a change as a result of the normal coming and going of folks and retirement, combined with the fact that we have financial targets to achieve as opposed to programs to cut.

We now know that this target number looks more like 84 positions at Privy Council, the department specifically. My understanding is that there are another 16 positions in the other entities that make up the PCO portfolio, for a total of 98 positions to be declared surplus across the PCO portfolio. Now I'm in a position where I can tell you specifically what that means at the Privy Council Office. We obviously took workforce adjustment very seriously. We put in place new measures to ensure that employees who were affected by this were treated fairly, with great respect, and that there was the utmost transparency in the process.

The first thing we did is we established a new union-management workforce adjustment committee, which I chair. We meet every two weeks. We have a very open and frank dialogue with our union colleagues. We also established an ADM-level oversight committee to control all new staffing at the Privy Council Office to ensure that folks who are impacted by workforce adjustment get the priority to which they are entitled. We established an ADM champion for the alternation program, which is a way for folks who aren't affected and want to leave the government to ask to be picked instead, and then the folks who don't want to leave can stay.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose: When are you going to announce the savings that will have been achieved?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Doucet: In June, we issued the first wave of our opting letters to employees: 66 employees at the Privy Council Office got opting letters to tell them that the process had begun and that they had 120 days to choose among the three options in the opting letters. That process has now run its course for that first wave. I can tell you that 10 of those 66 folks have decided to pick option A: stay for another year and see if they can get a job through their priority status. The remaining 52 employees are either taking a transitional support measure or they're taking an education package and either leaving the government now or being put on a priority list for the next two years.

As a result of those 66 letters, I can tell you that of those 66 folks, 40 have already left the Privy Council Office, some for jobs elsewhere in the public service as a result of the alternation program of which I spoke earlier, and some with the transitional support measures I spoke of. The remainder goes—

The Chair: I have to interrupt you there, I'm afraid. Thank you very much.

I think that answered most of your question, Jean-François. Perhaps if there is any further information you need, you could do it by writing a letter to the PCO.

I want to thank our witnesses from the Privy Council Office and the Transportation Safety Board for speaking to the supplementary estimates (B) today.

We're going to thank you for your presence and ask you to step away now while we actually put the question on the votes on our supplementary estimates to the committee. Thank you very much for your testimony and your information.

Ladies and gentlemen, while the witnesses are leaving, there are two items we could speak about briefly.

Treasury Board would like the meeting of December 11 to be an in camera meeting. I agree that perhaps it would be more productive, given that they're going to bring back the report on the different modelling of how the estimates are structured. I think it would be useful to do that as a free in camera meeting.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Another matter is regarding the meeting of December 13 with Public Works and the renovations of the parliamentary precinct. They would like to move that meeting to December 6 because there is some concern that we may not be here on December 13.

Mike, do you have any thoughts on that?

Mr. Mike Wallace: We put two meetings aside to look at the P3 report, right? We might be able to do that in one meeting, and if not, technically, I think we could push that. Who knows what the schedule will be like on December 13. I would like to hear from them. I know we would like to hear from them.

The Chair: In other words, we would like to hear about the progress made and the renovations to the government buildings in the parliamentary precinct. There is probably a 50-50 chance we will get to hear it on December 13. If we're serious and want to make sure we're going to get it, it would be on December 6.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I'm happy with December 6.

The Chair: Are there any feelings from the opposition?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. I think we can safely reschedule that. Thank you for your cooperation on those items.

We'll move to the votes.

On the supplementary estimates (B), there are a certain number of votes that are referred specifically to our committee.

I'll put the question.

Shall vote 95b under Canadian Heritage carry?

CANADIAN HERITAGE
Public Service Commission
Vote 95b—Program expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 95b agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall vote 1b under Privy Council carry?

PRIVY COUNCIL
Department
Vote 1b—Program expenditures.....\$2,574,327

(Vote 1b agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall vote 20b under Public Works and Government Services carry?

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
Shared Services Canada
Vote 20b—Operating expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 20b agreed to on division)

The Chair: I asked the clerk why there is the \$1 figure.

Perhaps, Mr. Clerk, you could explain what that means. It means that it approves the transfer of funds.

• (1040)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard): Yes, it's exactly as the chair just said. It is to approve the transfer of funds toward a certain organization, but these funds have already been approved by Parliament in former estimates during the current fiscal year. Basically, since Parliament needs to approve that transfer, you actually approve it in the form of a \$1 figure.

So it's \$1 that you approve, but actually it could hide a lot more.

The Chair: Yes. It's just so we're all aware of what this means.

Next, shall vote 25b under Public Works and Government Services carry?

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
Shared Services Canada
Vote 25b—Capital expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 25b agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall votes 1b and 15b under Treasury Board carry?

TREASURY BOARD
Secretariat
Vote 1b—Program expenditures.....\$1
Vote 15b—Compensation Adjustments.....\$83,059,327

(Votes 1b and 15b agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the chair report the supplementary estimates (B) 2012-13 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It's unanimous, I believe, that we shall report it.

Excellent. I want to thank colleagues and committee members for a thorough examination of the supplementary estimates (B), as referred.

I beg your pardon?

Ms. Linda Duncan: We're hearing Heritage after we've already voted then?

Mr. Mike Wallace: No. The Heritage vote is the Public Service Commission aspect, the salaries piece. Look up 95b, or whatever it is, under Canadian Heritage and it will show you.

The Chair: I think it was a useful exercise, and I'm glad we invited the Department of Public Works, even though they weren't a dollar figure in the estimates, because we had a chance to look at the DPRs. There's more to the examination of the estimates than just the supplementary estimates (B) themselves. We were living up to one of the recommendations of our own report on the estimates when we invited these witnesses and gave a thorough going-over of the departmental performance review documents, which are very valuable.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Who do we have coming on Thursday for sure?

The Chair: On Thursday....

The Clerk: Heritage Canada for one hour and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for the....

The Chair: Again, the DPRs may be the documents we might want to refer to in examining Heritage, even if it is considered after the fact.

Thank you for everyone's cooperation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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