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## **Board of Internal Economy**

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TRANSCRIPT

**Thursday, November 2, 2017**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Geoff Regan**



## Board of Internal Economy

Thursday, November 2, 2017

• (1120)

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Good morning, colleagues. This meeting of the Board of Internal Economy is called to order.

The first thing we have is the minutes of the previous meeting.

[Translation]

Does anyone have any issues with the minutes of the last meeting?

[English]

Are there any issues with the minutes of the last meeting?

Not seeing anything, the minutes are approved.

We go on to number two. We have something from the Joint Interparliamentary Council, and I'm going to turn to André Gagnon and Colette Labrecque-Riel

[Translation]

so they can tell us about it.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Gagnon and Ms. Labrecque-Riel.

**Mr. André Gagnon (Deputy Clerk, Procedure, House of Commons):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My presentation will be relatively short, and I will be pleased to answer your questions.

As you know, members are called upon to play several roles during their terms. They are very much involved in their ridings. They take part in the business of the House and are involved in the parliamentary committees. They also play a very important role in international and interparliamentary relations.

[English]

To that end, there are resources that are available to members of Parliament through the Joint Interparliamentary Council, commonly known as the JIC. In a similar way to the liaison committee, which allocates funds for standing committees, the JIC allocates the budget for activities to all the 13 parliamentary associations.

Today we're here to present the 2016-17 JIC report regarding expenditures for parliamentary associations. I'll ask Colette to give you a brief overview.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel (Clerk Assistant and Director General, International and Interparliamentary Affairs, House of**

**Commons):** We have prepared very short highlights of the annual report. The annual report is indeed presented by the Joint Interparliamentary Council. They reviewed it at their meeting in October. To give you a very high-level tale of what that last fiscal year was for associations, the report provides an overview of the activities and expenditures of the 13 parliamentary associations.

The report is basically divided into three sections. This is a fairly new format that we've been using for a few years now. In the first section, we give additional information as to how associations are governed and the mandate of the JIC. That's contained in the annual report itself.

The second section provides an overview of the 13 parliamentary associations and their activities over the fiscal year, as well as their expenditures.

Finally, the third section of the report is focused on each association itself. It provides a comprehensive list of all of their activities during the fiscal year as well as all of their expenditures over that fiscal year.

[Translation]

In the last fiscal year, the 13 Parliamentary associations were involved in 83 trips, the largest number in five years. It was a very busy year for the parliamentary associations.

While the number of activities increased, the average number of participants per activity declined. We undertook more activities, and the total number of participants was larger, but the average number of participants per activity fell. This is a strategy the associations use so they can take on activities while cutting costs.

[English]

The total budget for parliamentary associations for the last fiscal year, 2016-17, was essentially \$3.5 million, the same as for the three previous years. The total expenditures, as you can see, were \$3.4 million, basically representing a budget utilization of 98%, which is somewhat unheard of for associations, meaning that activities were indeed significantly higher than in previous years.

The membership fees—often people will use the word “contributions”—that the Canadian parliamentary associations pay to the international organizations for the multilateral associations amount to \$1.3 million of the total envelope available to the associations, leaving the expenditures at \$2.1 million for the last fiscal year.

That basically sums up what associations did during the last fiscal year.

I'm prepared to take questions, if there are any.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Before we go on to the request for enhanced support for parliamentary associations, are there any questions or comments from members?

Mr. Julian—no, it is Mr. Strahl. Fine.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chief Opposition Whip):** It takes the wisdom of the Speaker to decide.

We were talking about the activities of parliamentary associations. I don't know how much information you can give us or whether this needs to be pursued in another venue, but I was very concerned to learn that for some trips, specifically to countries like China, there has been a marked increase in the information required of members of Parliament in order to participate, some of it relating to extended family members and even to family members who are no longer family members, in the case of a divorce or something like that.

We've seen cases that have involved members of our caucus being denied entry to a country, but the parliamentary association travel continued even though members of the delegation had been denied entry into a country through no fault of their own.

I wonder if there's a policy that needs to be developed by the JIC or by the parliamentary associations to prevent this from happening in the future, or if you have any comments on why some members would proceed with the trip when the host country has shown that level of contempt for members of Parliament.

• (1125)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Yes, I'm aware of that particular situation.

Given my role in supporting these activities, all of these decisions as to whether or not to proceed with an activity would be taken by the executive members of that association. In that particular case, it would be the senators and members who are elected to the Canada-China parliamentary association.

The requirements for the visa, for instance, had been communicated to the members of the delegation and to ourselves via the diplomatic channels. We process, if you like, the applications. In terms of IIA staff, we had little to no input as to whether or not these are appropriate or not. They really are in the diplomatic channels. Again, any decision as to whether or not an activity is going to be carried out or not really is up to the association executive.

I find the suggestion as to whether the JIC could review the situation is an excellent one, and I can undertake to bring that message back to the Joint Interparliamentary Council.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I had the order as Mr. Strahl, Mr. Julian, and Mr. Rodriguez. I take it that Ms. Bergen wants to intervene on this particular subject.

Would members think that would be appropriate? Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. Bergen.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition):** Yes, mine is on this topic, if that's all right. Thank you.

Mark mentioned this on my behalf, but I did want to clarify one point for the record and what makes this more disturbing. Definitely

there was information requested that not only I felt to be too personal; another member, one of my colleagues, did not disclose that information, but China decided to deny the visa only to me.

I think that's what's particularly troubling. When the delegation is travelling as Team Canada, as a country, the message should be sent to another country that chooses not only....

I'm a parliamentarian and a House officer, and that kind of contempt was shown to me personally. We are funding these delegations to the tune of many millions of dollars, and there needs to be some sort of policy whereby we stand together or we fall together. I think that would be something that's in order.

I wanted to make sure that the facts are out there. I didn't withhold information, but that was not why my visa was not granted. There was another member who withheld information, and she was granted a visa.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. LeBlanc, is this on the same topic?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard):** No, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to be on your list, please.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay. Ms. Labrecque-Riel has mentioned that this is really a matter for the Joint Interparliamentary Council, but I can see why members are seized of it and concerned about it.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

**Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the New Democratic Party):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to be here at my first public meeting of the BOIE.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Welcome back.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes, I'm glad we're doing this. This is extremely important.

I'd like to stress my support for both Mr. Strahl's and Ms. Bergen's comments around the JIC. It's simply not acceptable that other countries pick and choose what our parliamentary delegations are. I think it needs to be stressed that this is a message that comes from the entire BOIE.

[Translation]

I would like to go back to the financial statements. By the way, thank you very much for providing us with all this information. I noted that certain parliamentary associations, particularly the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, had received contributions. An amount of \$5,000 was paid for an executive committee meeting and another \$7,000 for a Canadian regional conference. I would like to know about those contributions. The Canada-China Legislative Association received one, as did the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, but it was the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in particular that received contributions. It would be good to know the purposes for which those contributions were made. This appears on page 25.

• (1130)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Mr. Julian, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association uses a somewhat unusual financial formula. The association pays costs associated with the contributions every year, and a portion of those costs is returned to the association when it takes part in the activities. The formula is quite complex and unique. It dates back a very long time and is regularly applied. All the participating countries are in favour of it, but that in a way explains why we pay those contributions. As you can see, amounts appear to have been returned for certain activities. This is in exchange for the participation itself.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

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

Mr. Rodriguez, go ahead, please.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Chief Government Whip):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is slightly more general in nature. How have the changes in the Senate altered the dynamic now that most of the senators are independent?

What consequences have those changes had on the composition, operation, and other aspects of the committees?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** The transition the Senate is currently undergoing is clearly having quite a significant impact on the operation and governance of the associations. This has been a major issue for the Joint Interparliamentary Council and the 13 associations since I took on these duties. The impact is clear in two respects. As regards the composition of the executive committees, the associations are reviewing and reinterpreting the way those committees are constituted so that seats can be allocated on a proportional basis. However, that is not always easy.

Elections are usually held for the associations' executive committees very early in the spring of every year, just before the new fiscal year begins. The last time, all the committees managed to hold their elections and to react satisfactorily to the transition the Senate is going through. The various groups in the Senate were thus able to be well represented on the executive committees.

On the other hand, the delegations are still a concern for the Joint Interparliamentary Council and the associations. That being said, all decisions on the composition of the delegations are made by the executive committees. Even though the associations generally try to apply the proportionality principle, it is difficult to do so when the delegation consists of only four or five parliamentarians. However, the associations are very much aware of the problem and trying to find solutions. Furthermore, yesterday the Joint Interparliamentary Council adopted proposals to provide the associations with more guidance over the next few months.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. LeBlanc.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Like Mr. Julian, I am happy to be here. I am very pleased to be with you today since I was unable to attend the last public meeting of the Board of Internal Economy.

Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Labrecque-Riel.

I have a few specific questions. I know that several associations charge membership fees. If Canada wants to join them, Parliament must pay to attend their meetings and conferences. Can you give us a few examples of associations with the highest membership fees that we are required to pay? Do you agree that this is a valid expense and that participation by parliamentarians justifies the annual membership expenditure? I believe, and seem to recall, that the amount is quite high in some cases.

Furthermore, in table 5, on page 8 of the report, for example, you talk about additional or miscellaneous expenditures. These expenses amount to several tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the year in which they are incurred. What do those expenditures include? What kind of expenditure does this category include?

Thank you.

• (1135)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** To answer your first question, Mr. LeBlanc. The information on membership fees or contributions appears on page 9 of the report. Six parliamentary associations must pay membership fees. Those with the highest fees include the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the IPU, and the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, or NATO PA.

Membership fees are established by the international secretariats of those multilateral associations based on various formulas. Some associations calculate the formula based on the gross domestic product, or GDP, of the country in question, others on the basis of the size of their legislative assembly. The formulas are thus established by the international secretariat of each organization, and we join it or we do not. Since Canada belongs to these associations, we must pay their membership fees. If we do not pay them, we do not participate.

Does the—

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I do not mean to interrupt, but you just made me think of another question.

To your knowledge, has Canada previously informed a secretariat that it was charging us too much relative to other countries, or has it asked questions about the formula that results in a bill for  $x$  dollars? I understand that there is no negotiating, but is there at least a discussion between us and the secretariat in question? Could it be that, for all kinds of reasons, more specifically financial pressure, the secretariat believes that the membership fee charged to Canada or to the Parliament of Canada is a way of obtaining a sum of money that it will not charge other partners?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Absolutely.

A few years ago, Canada exercised some pressure over high membership fees, particularly those charged by the IPU. Some parliamentarians spoke with its international secretariat and even took part in a working group that conducted a review of membership fees. The amount has since been slightly reduced. What is hard to get a handle on is the fact that the invoice is in foreign currency. We are therefore subject to exchange rates. Although the membership fees declined, the bill remained the same for us as a result of the exchange rate. However, yes, we have exercised that kind of pressure in the past.

[English]

To get back to your last question about miscellaneous charges, a lot of these charges are actually for miscellaneous items. I can give a few examples of specific expenditures.

Half of those miscellaneous charges were due to captioning and interpretation services. When we host events, obviously we host them in multiple languages.

Some of the charges were for gifts, as is international practice. There is a certain expectation in terms of protocol in parliamentary diplomacy channels.

We also have cellular charge usages. As you can appreciate, sometimes when we travel internationally, it is, from a security perspective, not always wise to be hooking on to Wi-Fi, so we unfortunately have to use more of the data plans to be able to communicate with delegates as well as back here.

As well, there are courier services, external printing costs, and those kind of things. Those things do add up.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Referring to the same table that Mr. LeBlanc was referring to, I have a couple of questions. Are the limits on the value of gifts the same as the limits that a department or a ministry may give, or is that under a separate regulation?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** The context for gifts is that when our parliamentarians receive gifts, disclosure, as members know, is required at \$200 for a member of the House. It is somewhat different in terms of the Senate, but we do apply those policies.

In terms of how gifts are selected when we are an outgoing delegation and are the presenters of gifts, there is normally an exchange protocol to determine the appropriate gift. We are trying to negotiate a reduction of those gifts, because that is the tendency for many countries. We are also trying to do that. We are not in a position to say we shall bring no gifts, but the value is normally under \$200. It really is diplomatic courtesy we are trying to reciprocate, but we are cognizant of the value and the disclosure requirements for members. We do that with that in mind.

• (1140)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I would be interested if perhaps you could come back and just give us the average value. When I was a public office holder in the former government, we were often signing major treaties or agreements in principle with large indigenous groups, and even though they were historic national events, we were still limited to a very modest amount. I would hope that would be a constant for the JIC as well.

My primary question revolves around per diems and working meals. In all cases, the per diem amount listed in all five years is significantly higher than the hospitality and working meals. I have personally not travelled with a parliamentary association, but it's my understanding from those who have that they're very structured events. They are full of working meals, high-level dinners, and whatnot. It surprises me, quite frankly, that the per diem rate is that much higher.

Are members required to indicate...? Do they subtract when they receive a fancy dinner from their per diem? Is there an audit function to make sure, when that paperwork comes back, that the administrators looking through it will see that breakfast was provided at the hotel, there was a working lunch and working dinner, and those amounts were subtracted, or are members simply getting a five-day per diem for a five-day trip?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** I absolutely understand the preoccupation.

The amount of per diems may specifically be high, because there is a new tendency, even on international conferences, to not provide every single meal during the official conference activities.

That being said, there is an audit function carried out on every single travel claim coming back from all delegates, members, and senators. It is performed within my team. I do have a small financial team working with IIA, and we do review every single travel claim. We match it up against the official program of the activities undertaken. Where there are meals provided, if they were inadvertently included in the claim, they would be removed from the claim.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Following up on that, would I be right to understand that when there are outgoing delegations, most of the hospitality and working meals are either paid for by the conference itself or by the hosting country? Are there more outgoing than incoming? Otherwise, you wouldn't understand the....

It was pointed out that there is a distinction or difference between the costs of those two headings.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** I would have to go and dig into the actual numbers. However, my inclination would be to indicate that the amount shown under hospitality and working meals would be more for when we are hosting events. When our parliamentarians invite their counterparts here, the 13 associations are also in the business of inviting counterparts here. They are not always outgoing activities; they are very much incoming activities as well. That amount would primarily be for incoming activities. You wouldn't find hospitality on an outgoing activity.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Are there more outgoing activities than incoming?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Yes.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Okay. It's important to understand that.

Thank you.

You have the floor, Mr. Julian.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Like Mr. Strahl, I have not travelled internationally in years.

[English]

I'm interested in transportation guidelines and whether those have changed.

The last time I took a trip was a long time ago. Since 60% to 70% of the overall expenditures are in transportation, what are the guidelines about use of points by members of Parliament and senators? What are the guidelines around whether it's...I'm assuming it's economy class, or do the guidelines change according to the association? Do they set their own rules, or are there standard rules now that apply to all of the associations?

• (1145)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Certainly there are standard rules that apply to all associations. Again, this is subject to verification and audit by my financial officers.

In the policy established for parliamentarians, the one that IIA uses, whether it's members or senators, in terms of expenditures charged against the budgets for association activities, the rule of thumb is the nine-hour concurrent travel time. It's economy class unless it's over nine hours; then you go into business class. That's pursuant to the policy for members' travel.

The reason the transportation piece of the pie is so large is really due to the high cost of airline tickets, not just because it's business class but because of the difficulty in booking tickets. The staff are constantly trying to get confirmation of delegates' travel and travel plans in order to take advantage of lower prices, because the more in advance you book an airline ticket, the less the cost of that ticket. With parliamentarians, the reality is that you have busy schedules and it is highly unlikely that we can confirm all delegates three months ahead of an activity, although we would certainly love to be able to do that. We are constantly striving to reduce that cost in purchasing airline tickets, but it is a very significant cost. The variance in delaying the purchase of an airline ticket by a week can be very significant.

Since Canada is geographically where it is, inevitably most of our activities are across the pond.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I see.

It's Mr. Strahl, I think. Mr. Julian, are you finished for the moment?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

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

It indicates on the slide there that the participants have decreased from five to four on average per activity. As I am one who has not taken one of these trips, can you give me the average support function? How many support staff accompany the parliamentarians on a typical trip?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** There are clear guidelines established by the Joint Interparliamentary Council that determine how many staff will be accompanying any delegation. The rule is that a delegation is to be accompanied by two staff members: the association secretary, who is the clerk coming out of the group that I'm responsible for, and the analyst provided by the Library of Parliament.

A delegation needs to be five and above to be able to be accompanied by two staff members. A delegation that is less than five would be accompanied by only one staff member. In that particular situation, normally I and the management from the Library will determine, based on the nature of the activity, which staff member is best suited to accompany the delegation. This means that sometimes the clerk goes and will do some of the analyst's duties, or vice versa, to keep the costs down.

Finally, the last rule is that if there is a single delegate travelling, which does occur for some of these associations when they play a role on international committees, normally they are not accompanied. If ever an association or an association executive wishes to derogate from those rules, they must get permission from the Joint Interparliamentary Council.

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

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** You have the floor, Mr. Rodriguez.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Ms. Labrecque-Riel, you said at the start of your presentation that the number of trips had increased. Have you had enough personnel to manage that?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** This would be the perfect time to move on to the next presentation.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** All right.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think we are ready for that.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Gagnon.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Mr. Rodriguez, as you can see, you have helped us transition from the last point to this one.

The parliamentary associations were very busy in 2016-17.

[*English*]

so much so that the Joint Interparliamentary Council requested an increase in the activities budget for parliamentary associations. That request obtained the support of the Board of Internal Economy and the Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration. I think that was in November of 2016. This represented an increase of 47% of the activities budget, going from \$2.1 million, as we've seen, to \$3.1 million for the new fiscal year of 2017-18.

At that time, no request for extra resources was put forward regarding the support to parliamentary association activities benefiting from an expanded envelope, and we'll explain why in a second. We informed the JIC at that time that we would wait and see and report later on. We have reported back to the JIC, and that led to the recommendations that we're presenting today.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Thank you, Mr. Gagnon.

[*English*]

I can go through a few highlighted points and then we can take questions.

Yes, the Joint Interparliamentary Council, at the time that it considered the request for the additional funding, specifically asked me whether there was additional funding for activities. Presumably the activities will go up. Will you have enough staff to be able to support these activities? As André mentioned, we suggested that we wait and see, because it depended on the take-up of additional funding. It wasn't clear to me, because there is a difference between whether the take-up is in increasing the number of delegates to the same activities. That represents an increase in workload, but it is different from increasing the number of activities and simply having more activities. I wanted to wait and see the effect and the take-up by association.

The trend began last fiscal year in the increasing number of activities and the ways that associations were utilizing additional funding. The trend has been maintained and increased in the first six months of this fiscal year.

I should go back to the actual funding, the resource request.

The resource request is simply to add another team to be able to support association activities—one association secretary, one clerk, and one association administrative assistant—to be able to handle the increase in activities and respond to higher levels of operational requirements.

The third resource being requested is to be able to respond to the communications requirements of associations. Associations, as they're taking on parliamentary diplomacy work, wish to provide some communication of that work, whether it be by news releases or a very modest presence on social media or websites. Association chairs and executives have been presenting their requirement for better support of communication and a more responsive communications platform to the JIC for about two years now. The JIC agreed with these requests.

The total request is for the salaries for these three additional FTEs. As you see up on the board, that's a little over \$300,000. Under the 70/30 sharing formula between the House and the Senate, this would mean slightly under \$220,000 for the House, with the remainder being for the Senate.

In terms of the level of activity, André mentioned earlier that the additional funding to carry out activities was an increase of 47%. From the first six months of this current fiscal year, associations have increased the number of activities, particularly in outgoing. They have also increased the number of delegates. There are more activities and more delegates, and the average number of delegates per activity has also increased by 13%.

The request is a simple one. It is directly in line with our ability to be able to respond to operational requirements.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I have Ms. Bergen, Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Julian, and Mr. Strahl.

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

I was a fairly new member of BOIE when the increase was approved. It's a pretty substantial increase, 47%, for something that, as much as we all like to see the value in it, does not have measurable outcomes about which we can say, "Here's what we were able to achieve in measurable results."

A lot of it is relationships, and those things are important, but I am feeling uncomfortable, after being part of the group that approved a 47% increase for travel for members of Parliament and senators, to now be told that it's a \$200,000-and-some ask, which is a total for taxpayers of over \$300,000, and it would be a continual need. I'm feeling uncomfortable with this.

I'm wondering if there may be a better solution. Maybe the travel could be scaled back. Maybe what we need to find out is what the current staff could handle in terms of activity within these associations. Maybe what can be handled is what we should be looking at, and maybe we should scale back the travel a bit in order not to overwork the staff who are currently there. Has that been considered, or is that a possibility?

• (1155)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** In terms of being able to scale back what staff are able to support and not support, as I referred to earlier in terms of how many staff are allowed to travel with delegations, it is already fairly pared down. If you have a delegation of only four members, only one staff is allowed to go. Sometimes it's the IIA staff and sometimes it's the Library of Parliament staff. To go with four delegates without staff would be, again, something that the parliamentarians may have thoughts on. There was a discussion this week at the Joint Interparliamentary Council specifically of that rule, and the council itself wished to maintain that level of staffing.

Often when associations are engaging on the international scene in either conferences or bilateral relations, Canada does pay a hefty price in membership fees to adhere to some of those, especially the multilateral associations. If the delegates are to be effective as they participate in those activities, they do need support. They often take on international roles in these multilateral associations, and they need support from staff to play those roles, whether it's in drafting resolutions or in presenting reports at those international activities.

Now, what can staff do less of? Again, I've done an administrative review. I've been with IIA for two years, and we have done a lean review exercise to try to find efficiencies in some of our business line areas. We've done an administrative review for the whole of IIA. The staffing basically hasn't changed since the creation of this joint service. It has remained the same since the early 2000s. The staffing level has remained the same, whereas the number of parliamentarians has increased and the number of activities has increased.

The staff are trying to meet the operational requirements, but it is quite clear that if the level of funding remains the same and the level of activity remains high, I will not be able to respond to operational requirements.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** I appreciate that, but my suggestion was that maybe the activity be reduced. That would be what I would see as a solution.



**Mr. André Gagnon:** From that perspective, again, it's like parliamentary committees. Parliamentary committees are independent, on their own, to decide whatever activities they would like to take on. It's about the same thing for parliamentary associations, inside all the guidelines and all of the budget allocation provided to them. Our staff reacts to those situations the same way we do for committees.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Rodriguez is next.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two brief questions.

First, what is the process for hiring association secretaries, association assistants, and communications coordinators? How are those people selected?

My second question specifically concerns the communications coordinator. There is currently no form of communication, and this person will perform that role for all the associations. Is that correct?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Thank you.

With respect to the hiring process, first, I would like to point out that, under the formula used, for funding in particular, the percentages are 70% for the House and 30% for the Senate. The same formula is used for what we call "hot bodies". Our target is for 70% of management employees to come from the House and 30% from the Senate. However, that balance is currently not being met and has not for some time.

I would note that, if this committee consents, the three full-time equivalents, or FTEs, would be Senate employees. Their representation on my team is not 30%. That was the first point.

The first position, that of clerk, is subject to a rotational program. The principle is similar to that of the House and Senate. These people are selected from a centralized team and are assigned to the committees, either to *Journals*—we are talking about a Senate employee—or to International and Interparliamentary Affairs. These are people who can accept rotations. It would be a new employee or someone who currently occupies a clerk position in the Senate and who already has experience who would join my team.

There will be a competition for the administrative assistant position. This will be an additional resource.

As for the coordinator position, no one in my directorate—which is a joint service—is responsible for the associations' communications needs. Consequently, we have to insinuate ourselves into the House's formula and that of the Senate, which is unique in my service. To meet the demands and needs of the parliamentary associations, I think it would be much more efficient if we had someone on the ground who could understand the issues of both houses and respond efficiently to them.

• (1200)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you.

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have an additional \$1 million for the 2017-18 fiscal year. However, I would like to know what percentage of that increase has already been used or reserved for certain obligations such as planned travel.

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** As you can see, Mr. Julian, the associations' work presupposes long-term planning. In view of the high cost of travel, the more activities are confirmed in advance, the better it is. Very early this year, the associations submitted activity plans for the 12 months of the current fiscal year.

As regards expenditures for the current fiscal year, I can tell you we are now halfway through the available budget. This is a faster pace than usual. Activities requiring the most funds usually take place later on in the year. Many activities are normally held in December, January, February, and March. That is particularly true for multilateral activities and conferences. In my opinion, if delegates' participation is confirmed, we may already have bought the airline tickets for an activity that will take place in January. The expenditures are not booked, but they are definitely incurred in large part.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I understand, but, when you say 50%, do you mean 50% of the total budget or 50% of the additional \$1 million?

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** It amounts to the same thing since \$1.4 million of the \$3.1 million now available for activities has already been spent.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

I read through all of the documentation yesterday, and I've asked some questions. I feel very uncomfortable about coming back and adding money to the JIC when we've already, as a group, the BOIE—I wasn't there, but I'm sure smart heads were around the table—added a million to the budget. If the money is not fully subscribed, and I believe that is the case... I think it is true that the staffing is deficient, because there is no doubt that when you increase the overall level of activity, it is going to put a real strain on staff that are working very hard already. I believe those additional positions are needed; I just don't feel comfortable at all with giving another \$313,000 to the JIC when we've provided them with a million-dollar increase earlier this year.

It would seem to me that the path the JIC should be taking is to use that increase they received to put their administrative policy in order and provide that staffing level out of the increase of funds. I don't feel comfortable adding \$313,000 to their budget. I do believe that with the money they have already, there is an ability to allocate a portion of those funds for the staffing increase so that the staff can be in a settled environment and do their good work, and not have the strains that come from such a significant increase in activity.

•(1205)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** It appears to me there's not likely to be a consensus in favour of accepting this request. In view of that, do members wish to continue the discussion on this topic, or do you wish to go on to the next item? That's the question, I guess.

Mr. Strahl is next.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** If we are going to ask for more information, I want to get some thoughts on the record and ask some questions as well.

As has been said, there's been a near-50% increase in funding, going from \$2.1 million to \$3.1 million. We've learned that the resulting increase in activities is having a significant impact on IIA staff. None of us want to see that, but there are two solutions: one is to increase the staff so that they no longer feel that pressure, and the other is to reduce the level of activity, to rightsize the level of activity with the current staffing levels.

That's a question that I would have. What level of activity would work? If 83 trips—travel activities, whatever that means, incoming, outgoing—are too much for the current group, I would like to know what the right number of trips for the current group would be. I think that's what the JIC should be looking at.

They should present us with two scenarios. One is the expansionist scenario of “We have a million dollars extra, and here's what we need to support that.” I understand there are two different funding envelopes, but if we can't support an extra million dollars in travel, then we shouldn't have an extra million dollars in travel. That's my perspective on it. They need to give us an indication of how many trips they can take.

I can tell you, as a new whip, seeing all of these travel requests come across my desk.... As they said in *Field of Dreams*, if you build it, they will come. If you offer a trip, members of Parliament will line up. Parliamentarians will take the trip. If the trips are reduced, fewer members will travel, yes, but I think we need to have a rationalization here. Just because they were granted a significant amount of money doesn't mean it all needs to be spent.

That's what I would like to see the JIC and staff come back with—what they can do with the current staffing. It would be incumbent on the JIC to do that within the current funding envelope for the staffing group.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I think that's a comment, unless....

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** I will certainly bring that message to the JIC.

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

Ms. Chagger is next.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say, first of all, that I do appreciate the fact that, although there was an increase in support, as was requested, you have actually looked to see where those resources can go, and now are coming back after looking at where those activities are. I really do believe that Canada, more than ever, has an important role to play

on the international stage. I believe that what these committees do is provide those opportunities.

Because I know we've been really about collecting evidence-based data to make sure we find and measure the engagement in relation to these activities, I further believe that there must be an ability to see what the activities of the associations are and where there are impacts, because we're seeing that our economy is growing and we're seeing that businesses are not only looking to Canada but looking to the world. Part of these relationships, the people-to-people connections, increase business-to-business connections and therefore open up greater export markets for great Canadian products and services. I'd love to know if we're exploring metrics to be able to perhaps measure these engagement activities and what they result in.

You mentioned communications and the support that's necessary, but could you tell me a little bit more about the outcomes that we are expecting with better support? I've noticed that like all Canadians, members and staff put in many hours, so at some point it has to be realistic. We have to ensure that we're treating people well and compensating them adequately. I'd love to know what some of the outcomes might be.

I further understand that members of all parties are present in JIC, so they must have done some work around this prior to coming to this table. Members of all parties must have had some agreement or concern that the original increase was not adequate. I would love to know if you can inform us, through the Chair obviously, of any major concerns in making this request, and why it is so necessary at this time.

Thank you.

•(1210)

**Ms. Colette Labrecque-Riel:** Okay, I'll see if I can address all your points, Ms. Chagger.

In terms of exploring metrics, that would really belong to each of the associations. When they prepare their planned activities, they are meeting certain objectives within their mandate. Whether it's a multilateral or bilateral association, when deciding upon their activities for the next fiscal year, they look at what is occurring. Where are Canada's opportunities internationally?

Again, I'm not well positioned to speak to that value judgment. It is made by parliamentarians and members of the executives of each of the associations. For example, I know that there was a significant discussion at the JIC about the level of funding they would allocate to the Canada-U.S. bilateral association, given the priority that Canada may have with regard to its relationship with the United States, but again, this is not something that we would have any effect on at a staff level. As André mentioned earlier, we are very responsive to operations, activities, and decisions taken by the parliamentarians who are members of these associations.

In terms of what would be the value added or what the addition of three additional staff could bring, it really is only to meet the increase in operational demands, in the sense that current staff are working extended hours. There is an increase in sick leave. There is a decrease in ability to take annual leave. I'm not trying to propose that staff undertake a new program, a new level of service; it really is to meet the daily requirements of increasing association activities.

You're quite right that the members of the JIC are represented by all of the parties in the House and Senate as well. The discussion in terms of the initial funding request came from pressures from all of the associations.

Every year the planning exercise is the same. They submit costed-out plans for activities, and the total of those budget requests far exceeds what's available in the budgetary envelopes.

JIC is caught in a cyclical pattern of having to sometimes be able to allocate funds to address only 50% of the submitted plans, so associations have to go through an exercise after they prepare their plans and then receive the bad news that they are getting only 50% of what they need to carry out those plans. Then they go back and ask which of the activities they wanted to do will be cut out. This is a cyclical pattern for associations. The pressure for that increased funding was to try to permit them to carry out a little bit more of those activities that correspond to their mandates.

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

I think it's time for us to move on to another topic.

We'll go to the next item, which is 3(a), the submission to the board regarding sustaining an evolving campus-wide operation under the Long-Term and Vision and Plan.

[*Translation*]

Now I invite Benoit Giroux, Julie Allard, Mark Giguère and Rima Adams to approach the table.

Go ahead, Mr. Giroux.

[*English*]

**Mr. Benoit Giroux (Director General, Parliamentary Precinct Operations, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're here for a financial ask, for additional resources to sustain the evolving campus, as well the upcoming move to the West Block and especially the decommissioning of the Centre Block.

Over the last several years, the campus has undergone significant changes as part of the ongoing rehabilitation of projects funded under the—

• (1215)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I'm sorry to interrupt. Is this under section B as opposed to section A of our books?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** It's section A.

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

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** The campus has undergone a number of changes over the years under the approved long-term vision and plan.

Next year, 2018, is a milestone year for the House of Commons with the upcoming opening of the West Block, the visitor welcome centre phase 1, and the government conference centre. Further to this, we're also going to initiate the decommissioning of the Centre Block in preparation for its long-term rehabilitation.

To support these major initiatives and to sustain the ongoing support for the campus-wide operations, the move to the West Block, and the decommissioning of the Centre Block, we need additional resources to continue to provide the current service levels to members.

We have a table here that highlights the asks and the different types of activities.

As you can see, it's divided into two different categories. The first category is the ongoing support for campus-wide operations, which is mainly an ask for permanent resources. The second category is the move to the West Block and the decommissioning of Centre Block which, of course, is an ask for temporary resources over a two- to three-year period. Mainly, the additional resources are in the area of maintaining the building and the additional admin services that will be required due to the configuration of the West Block and the visitor welcome centre.

The West Block doesn't have a dedicated freight entrance. It's going to be serviced through the west side of the Centre Block, which adds additional transportation of day-to-day deliveries—that could be mail, food, garbage, recycling, all types of deliveries—over a distance and over multiple levels that we don't currently face in Centre Block.

We would also need temporary resources in the area of locksmithing, since we have to remove all the locks in the Centre Block to preserve them, as well as in the area of photographic services to support the curator in the management and documentation of the heritage collection.

In terms of transportation and fleet management services, in the future setting of the operation of the West Block and the visitor welcome centre, all food will be transported from the food production facility, which is off site in the south end of Ottawa. It would require additional trips, because we're going to lose the kitchen we currently have in Centre Block.

There's an ask for two additional resources for the refinishing and retouching of the heritage furniture. We have a long list, provided by the curator, of heritage furniture that will leave the Centre Block and is not going to be reassigned to the West Block. It needs to be retouched and refinished in order to be ready for the reopening of the Centre Block and to also be maintained in the collection.

Other temporary resources are needed in terms of procedural services and readiness of system, and also by the curator's office for the actual management of the heritage collection during the decommissioning of the Centre Block. There are the same types of requirements in terms of all the assets that we're going to move out of Centre Block that have to be tracked, stored, and so on, in terms of multimedia and material that can track management activities .

This is a total of 14 permanent resources and eight temporary resources. The actual amounts are in the last bullet under that slide. For 2018-19, it's an ask of \$2.7 million.

● (1220)

For 2019-20, it's \$2.1 million. It goes down because we exhaust some of the temporary resources, and it's the same thing for 2020-21, when temporary funding goes down to \$1.7 million. For the remaining, the permanent funding ask for 2021-22 is \$1.4 million.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I have Mr. Rodriguez.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Allow me to make a comment. I realize that even francophones almost always make their presentations in English. I say that with all due respect and no ill will, but I would note that the two official languages are equal here.

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Giroux.

First, I would like to know how many buildings are under your responsibility.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** More than 25 buildings are under the responsibility of the House of Commons. The number has increased in recent years with the addition of 180 Wellington Street last year and the Sir John A. Macdonald Building the previous year. Another one, the visitors centre, has just been added.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** I assume the life cycle may vary from one building to the next. Consider, for example, the Justice Building, which was renovated 16 or 17 years ago. The other buildings are being renovated, but I assume that, once they are completed, you will then renovate the Justice Building. These are normal cycles. Is that more or less the case?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Precisely. Preventive maintenance must be done on the buildings, and that is part of their life cycle; we have to renovate them. The Department of Public Works and Government Services also has a building rehabilitation plan for that purpose.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Funding was set aside to move offices from the Centre Block to the West Block and so on. You will probably reach your objectives, but what will happen if the move does not take place this summer? What will happen to that money?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** That is a very good question, Mr. Rodriguez.

Under the current timetable, the move is planned for summer 2018. We have come to see you now so that the necessary funding is in the next budget. If the move is delayed by a year, for example, then we would not need that money for this year. We would come back to ask you to carry it over to supplementary estimates.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you, gentlemen.

Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

[English]

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

I have several questions or comments that I'm hoping you can address.

A note here says that internal reallocations will not be sufficient to fully mitigate the anticipated resourcing pressures on the new facilities.

You mentioned the Centre Block cafeteria. I assume the Parliamentary Restaurant would be similarly unavailable. There are several staff members there. Some of them, I know, only work when we do. What is happening? Are they all going to work in this off-site location? Are they being laid off?

If we're closing down one building and opening the other, it's surprising to me that we need 22 new full-time equivalents to maintain the level of service. I know you've explained some of them, but explain the reallocation process for me. What is happening to the hundreds of staff who manage the assets here, including the assets that will be different between West Block and Centre Block?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** We reallocate all the staff from the Centre Block to the West Block or other buildings as required, depending on the operational requirements.

When you compare the footprint of the Centre Block that we have to maintain with the footprint that we're going to have to maintain in the West Block, in the visitor welcome centre, phase 1, it's basically the same. There's a 1.5% difference between the two different footprints, which is not significant. The difference comes from the types of finishes that will be in the West Block. We need carpeting and lots of glass that will require additional maintenance operations from our staff.

Also, as I indicated earlier, there's the fact that the building will not have a direct freight entrance. All the deliveries will be done from a remote freight area, which requires additional distance, and we've done a full workload assessment of what that means. That's where some of those resources will be required.

● (1225)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** This isn't new trucks, then; this is individuals to physically move materials from that location to the other. Maintenance and materiel handling services want two new full-time equivalents, and then transportation and fleet management is three. Are those two new permanent people needed just because they're going to be travelling physically further? Is that what you're saying to me?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** There's that. The delivery requires additional personnel because we're not getting the deliveries to the exact door. We still have to travel the goods within the building, which we don't currently do in this building, from the door to the actual door.

Also, let's not forget that we operate on shifts, so we cover two shift operations. Right there, because of the hours of delivery services, we have to double up the amount, because it's over more than one shift.

In terms of the transportation, it's because all the food deliveries will be done from the food production facility. Right now, we're using the food production facility at a reduced percentage, probably at 40% of the overall capacity that it was designed for. As we move to the West Block, since we're losing the production kitchen in Centre Block, everything will be produced at the remote site, which is 15 kilometres away, and we're going to have to do additional deliveries and we need additional refrigerated trucks for that.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Are the trucks themselves included in this \$2.7 million, or is that a separate—

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Yes, it's all included.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Okay.

Under tenant operations, you talked about the fact that "...capacity must be expanded and operations must be structured differently for optimal response efficiency." I don't particularly pretend to know what "optimal response efficiency" is, but can you describe the difference that a member would experience if this did not go ahead and if the three additional permanent resources were not allocated? What could a member expect to see differently in our day-to-day operations here?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** The activities in the tenant area have increased by over 40% in the last one and two years because of the onboarding of the Sir John A. Macdonald and 180 Wellington buildings. What we forecast with the move to the West Block is that this trend will continue. In order to give the members the level of service they deserve, we looked at how we can streamline our operations and become more efficient and better allocate our resources to continue to provide the same or improved level of service to the day-to-day requests we receive from the different members' offices in day-to-day building support activities.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** In the case of the temporary additions to the staffing levels, what are the obligations? What guidelines are you operating under to determine that this should be a full employee with benefits? The cost for, say, a new locksmith is nearly \$100,000 when you factor in salary and benefits and operations. I know we have heritage assets that are a little different, but in a major corporation there would be a competitive bidding process for some of these more temporary activities. The other one I saw was ensuring that the new chamber is up and running.

Do you have any flexibility to do an RFP on that, or is it that we are required under the way we operate to have that as part of the group?

• (1230)

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** In those types of resources, we have two ways to look at it. We could hire people through terms, which is basically contracts with an expected end to the term, or we could go through a professional services agreement. Often in those cases, when we go to a professional services agreement with consultants and that sort of thing, especially when it's for a two- to three-year period, it costs us more than it would if we hired the people directly and paid a salary.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Have you done that analysis?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** We've done that analysis and for us, it's the most financially responsible way to go for the two- to three-year period.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have two more quick things. I'm sorry for going on here.

When I look at the furniture in the whip's suite on the fourth floor, I hope you're not counting my 15-year-old couch as a piece of heritage furniture—

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

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** —that needs to be warehoused and evaluated. Is there an analysis being done, so it's not just things that are old or things that are here but things that have significant value.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Yes, absolutely. The curator of the House does an ongoing analysis of the collection and has the authority to decide what comes into the collection and is deemed heritage. Indeed, not all the furniture we have gets categorized.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Okay.

My final question is general, but important, I think. Of the 22 full-time equivalents that you're asking for, are they all absolutely necessary to maintain current service levels or are they nice to have, so this would be better for members? Are we improving the service level or maintaining it? It's a significant ask, and I think we need to respect taxpayers and hear from you that these are absolutely necessary for the continuing function of the parliamentary precinct.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** We continuously review our operations to ensure that we're the most efficient in the day-to-day delivery of our operation. We strive to reinvent ourselves; I heard Colette earlier talking about lean exercises, etc. We do the same thing in operations to ensure that we get the best value for money.

The LTVP was approved in 2001. We're coming to the crunch when it comes to fruition and adds pressure beyond what we could sustain. That's the delta that we're looking at.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you very much.

I was hoping to ask a lot of questions, but I also want to add a comment to those of Mr. Rodriguez. I think it is important, particularly since we are meeting in public, that the presentations be made in both official languages starting now.

My questions, which are still unanswered for the moment, concern the four permanent resources. I understand we are temporarily required to adjust for the transfer of equipment because the service entrance is far away. That is understood. When we talk about permanent employees, they are permanent for as long as renovations are being made to the Centre Block. It seems to me we will be returning to the Centre Block, we hope, in 10 years. The configuration was designed based on the fact that all the renovations would be complete. No service entrance has been planned for the West Block because it is temporary. I understand that.

In the long term, it makes no sense to have a service entrance since it would block the West Block. However, when we talk about these four resources, we are really talking about the renovation period. These are permanent employees for the duration of the project because there will then be a much more appropriate service entrance. We will not need to increase staff to transfer equipment since the number of employees normally assigned to that service entrance will be enough.

• (1235)

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** We consider a period of 10 years or more as permanent. There are rules preventing us from retaining employees who are hired for a determinate period of more than a certain number of years. If, in 10 years, we find ourselves in a situation in which we have to adjust our staff, we will do so by attrition, as we usually do.

Once we have determined the access points to the new Centre Block, any necessary staff reduction will be done, as usual, by attrition and without there necessarily being any impact on the current number of employees.

[English]

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

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

I have a couple of specific questions.

I think there still needs to be a bit more clarity around the whole food services issue. If I'm understanding you correctly, the off-site facility is our facility as well, so in a sense you're going to have to hire more people for that, or have more people there, and then there's delivery. Right now you're attributing about five extra staff for something that I would think means we need fewer staff in food services, because we don't have a kitchen in West Block and we're not preparing the food. I would like a little more clarity around that.

I have two other questions.

One is around what you're calling "procedural services", where you need a resource for a one-year period to ensure operational readiness and testing of all systems. Wouldn't that be when the installer installs the system? Is it not part of the service that they test to ensure it's ready? They guarantee it, to some extent.

As well, I've noticed the operating line. I don't know where those numbers come from. For example, in the first category, maintenance and materiel handling, it's for six full-time employees operating, and it's about \$17,000, whereas when you go to the last page, ongoing support for campus-wide operation, for two full-time employees, it's over \$217,000 per year. I'm not sure what that operating line means. Perhaps you could explain that to me as well as where those numbers come from.

On that same category, we have almost half a million dollars for two full-time employees who are going to be refinishing heritage furniture. I'd like a little more explanation on that. That's the last category on page 4.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** I'm going to answer the first one related to food services. In the spring we came with a submission for the transformation of food services to be ready for the transition required for the upcoming full utilization of the food production facility and the facilities we're going to have on the Hill.

We're still going to have what we call the "finishing kitchens" in the West Block for both the cafeteria and parliamentary dining rooms. The food is produced at the food production facility, transported to the campus, and *la mise en assiette* is being done on site. We do the final preparation in the West Block, or in other sites as required. That was approved earlier in the spring to allow us to do that transition.

The additional resources we're asking for here are the additional transportation requirements for the food between the off-site facility and the precinct.

The second question was related to testing the readiness of the systems. Those are in-house systems they use for chamber business, committee business, etc. To make sure the systems are fully operational in the new setting in the West Block, we need one person for, I believe, one year, the transition year, to do all the testing required to make sure there's no fault in these systems as we move to the West Block. That's the requirement for the temporary resource there.

• (1240)

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** I would think, because I'm assuming it's all brand new, that testing—

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Yes. We want to make sure it works well and there are no surprises when we operate in the new context.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Then there's that last category on the half a million dollars for two people who are going to be refinishing the heritage furniture. That's going to put pressure on trade services, and so to meet members' needs, two permanent resources within trade services will be required. There's that, and then also that operating line. Where does that number come from in each category?

Those are all my questions.

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** There's the salary for the two FTEs, and there's also an operating ask of \$200,000 for the operation, which includes some equipment and consumables used to support the activities. The actual FTE requirement is in the salaries column. It's not \$500,000.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** I recognize the salaries. In these categories, the operating doesn't look like a formula; it's just a number. I wasn't sure what that operating—

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** It's an operational requirement to conduct the business for the additional workload we forecast to support the campus.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I have Mr. LeBlanc and then Mr. Strahl.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Thank you for your presentation and your excellent work, which you have been doing for many years. I know this is an extremely complex project that will be difficult to carry out.

We have previously discussed one question. I would like you to recall for us what was said or to reflect on the question of moving the Centre Block to the West Block a few months or a year before a general election.

When the long-term plan was established, we did not know there would be a succession of minority governments. Electoral cycles change, and there should be a general election in 2019. Is it appropriate to move everyone in 2018?

Many members believe and hope they will be re-elected. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. A natural change may occur following a general election, and I wonder how you would explain this scenario in view of the upcoming election? I am not suggesting we should wait until 2019. I simply want us to think about the appropriate time. That is all.

• (1245)

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** I see.

I will let Ms. Kulba answer that question since it concerns the entire long-term vision and plan, the LTVP.

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

[*English*]

**Ms. Susan Kulba (Senior Director, Architecture & LTVP Program Management Directorate, House of Commons):** We're currently working with PSPC, Public Services and Procurement Canada, on delivering the West Block project. We were here at the last board meeting, and essentially we're looking at three scenarios for the move.

The project is currently going well. There's still a lot of work to finish off over the next seven months. PSPC is predicting that they're going to finish on schedule and on budget so that we can move in the summer or fall of next year. However, we do have three occupancy scenarios based on our risk assessments.

One is the actual move on time. The second would be, if there's a delay, to move over the Christmas period. The third scenario would be the following summer, which coincides with the election. We recognize that this would save a move, and if the project is delayed for any reason, that is the scenario we would go to.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have a brief question that deals probably more with the eight temporary positions. As Ms. Bergen noted—and perhaps I'm misunderstanding—it will take one year to test. It's a big room and it's an important room. It might take six months or three months instead, and the same with locksmith services and other work. What is the mechanism? Is it just that the employee who has signed a one-year contract has a very good year? Is there a provision that when the work is done, the employment ends?

**Mr. Benoit Giroux:** Yes, when we hire term employees, they have a start date and an end date. The end date can come prematurely if the operational requirements change. We have the flexibility to do that. For example, a requirement for one year has been forecast for that specific task. However, if it takes less time than that, we have the mechanism to end it without any consequences.

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

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** That's all I have for members wishing to speak or ask questions about this. Is there agreement to approve this request?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We're not quite at one o'clock yet. We're coming toward it. We'd like to go to the last item, which is a submission regarding sustaining the information technology systems and facility assets acquired through the long-term vision and plan.

We have Mr. Stéphan Aubé ready to lead this discussion, along with our colleagues Jean-Marc Lundy and Susan Kulba.

I'm told the room is available beyond one o'clock. I don't know if members of the board are...? I'm seeing some heads shaking. I'm not surprised, because, of course, House leaders and whips get busy around one o'clock most days. Apparently you're not going to be available after one o'clock, so we'll go to one o'clock. If we aren't able to finish this by then, we'll come back to it at our next meeting.

Go ahead, Monsieur Aubé.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce Jean-Marc Lundy, deputy director, finance, in my organization. He can provide you with details on the financial aspects. You have already met Susan Kulba, senior director and the person responsible for long-term renovations on the Hill. I am also accompanied by the chief financial officer, who can attest to the fact that the funding we are requesting today is necessary to the administration of the House.

[*English*]

We're here to obtain funding approval by the Board of Internal Economy to operate and maintain life cycle building components and building connectivity assets that have been acquired through the long-term vision and plan since 2001.

If approved by the board, this will allow the board and the HoC to fulfill our role and requirements in order to sustain the LTVP as agreed to by Public Services and Procurement Canada in 2003.

It would also allow the House administration to re-baseline our budget in the context of these investments that were made and also in the context of the approval that was given by the board to the House administration in 2014-15. In 2014-2015, the board approved \$12 million to the House administration to sustain these assets. We're here today to seek additional funding as new assets are coming on board and new costs are coming to bear in order to support the long-term vision plan and the facilities that have been transferred over to the House's responsibility.

•(1250)

[Translation]

Before going into the details, I would like to explain briefly to the members of the Board of Internal Economy why we are here today. It is important to understand the scope of the renovations that have been made on Parliament Hill since 2001. Then we will move on directly to the recommendations, allowing time for members to ask questions.

[English]

In 2001, the renovations were approved by this board. When the renovations were approved, it was all about renovating the Centre Block. To get to this building, we needed to vacate it, and to vacate it, we needed to renovate the West Block. As you saw last week, we came and made a presentation about the status of the West Block, but to vacate the West Block, we needed to renovate other facilities and also acquire additional space. This process started prior to 2001.

[Translation]

The first renovation project was the Justice Building. The members who have been here for some time will recall that we acquired this building through Public Services and Procurement Canada in order to renovate it and create workspaces for MPs.

We had also decided that we had to move out of the Wellington Building and the Promenade Building, which is now the Valour Building, to vacate the spaces in the West Block.

We also moved all personnel of the House of Commons Administration, and the employees now occupy offices on Queen, Bank, and Sparks streets. The spaces shown in yellow on the chart indicate what was done between 2001 and 2007.

We continued the renovation process between 2007 and 2016, focusing mainly on the Wellington Building, which houses the 10 committee rooms currently used, and on the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, which replaces room 200, which was previously located in the West Block. All the events that were held in room 200 of the West Block now take place in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

We also built temporary committee rooms in the Rideau Canal Building at 1 Wellington Street, which became necessary because we had to vacate the West Block. Then we made investments in order to relocate certain spaces allocated to the House Administration mainly at 131 and 155 Queen Street.

As regards the period from 2017 to 2020, we mentioned last week that occupancy of the West Block was scheduled for fall 2018. The visitors centre will be the entry point for MPs and the public who are required to have access to the Parliamentary Precinct.

Broadly speaking, the Parliamentary Precinct now comprises 27 buildings, 11 of which are occupied solely by the House of Commons. The investment in the properties we are discussing today represents approximately \$200 million, which was transferred from Public Services and Procurement Canada to the House of Commons following the long-term renovations. The purpose of the requests we are making today is primarily to maintain and manage the life cycle

of those assets, which were transferred following the renovations and were not included in the initial budget of the House of Commons.

I am going to take a few minutes to discuss governance and especially the roles and responsibilities of the various institutions. During the renovations, Public Services and Procurement Canada is the main organization responsible for the building. It is therefore responsible for the entire building, specifically all matters pertaining to the renovations and related funding as well as the capital expenditures required to carry out those renovations.

•(1255)

[English]

The role of the House of Commons in the context of the renovation is to play the role of the technical authority. We're there to advise PSPC on our requirements and also to ensure that our requirements are met through the renovations. We are also responsible for the operational financing to support the assets that are transferred through the renovations to the House. That is why we're here today.

The chart that you're seeing here today basically is a recap of the investments that have been made since 2001. From 2001 to 2016, over \$128 million of assets have been transferred. They include specialized air conditioners, specialized battery systems, compressors, humidity control systems that are specific to the House of Commons, specific broadcasting lighting systems, and specific technologies to support these rooms, such as the audio system and the broadcasting system. These are the components and the connectivity systems that have been transferred since 2016. We are planning to transfer an additional \$75 million of assets from 2017 to 2019.

In 2014-15, as approved by the board, \$9 million of the \$12 million that I referred to earlier was distributed across these four major investment portfolios. Investments were made in the context of the networking for the House, broadcasting and audiovisual capabilities, the telephony aspects, and other elements relating to physical security that we support.

In terms of the distribution of the costs, over 40% of the costs that we incur are paid directly for maintenance fees that we incur on a day-to-day basis. Thirty per cent of the costs are assigned towards the life-cycling of these components and connectivity assets. In the past, the cost for salaries was around 12%; we're planning an average cost of around 21% of the funding required for salary requirements. This is basically a distribution of how the money is spent currently and how the money will be spent over the next three years. You've seen the components assets and you've seen the technology assets.

These are the recommendations that we're seeking. In addition to the \$12 million that we asked for in 2014-15, we're here today to seek additional funding for connectivity assets of \$2 million for the next year, for 2019-20 an additional \$3 million, and then for 2020-21 an additional \$5 million. For the components assets, after the \$3 million that was approved in 2015, we're seeking an additional \$6 million a year for the next three years. That's to keep the focus on the assets that were basically transferred to us more than 17 years ago now.

I will open it up for questions, sir, in either French or English.



**Hon. Geoff Regan:** We only have a few minutes.

I have Mr. Strahl. I'll see if we get to one o'clock by the time—

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, given the \$30 million ask and the three minutes left, perhaps we could bring this group back for questions.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** That makes sense to me. I just wanted to highlight that when I said that I know the House leaders and the whips have important work to do at this point, I certainly did not

mean to suggest that the Minister of Fisheries would not also. Naturally I would feel strongly about that. He would also have important work to do.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** You, Mr. Speaker, would be particularly familiar with those important responsibilities.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I recall them well.

I thank colleagues very much. This meeting is adjourned.

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