



RIDEAU HALL

October 31, 2022

Mr. Paul Cardegna
Clerk of the Committee
Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates
House of Commons
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Cardegna:

Pursuant to the Committee's motion adopted on October 6, 2022, and regarding the provision of documents related to expenses and invoices for the Governor General's travel for an official visit to the Middle East in March 2022, at the request of the Government of Canada, please find uploaded on the House of Commons SharePoint site the documents from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (OSGG).

These documents provided are as follows:

- The list of Official Foreign visits of Governors General between 2014 to 2022, identifying the lead department for each visit and other partner Departments involved;
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (OSGG) and Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), now known as Global Affairs Canada (GAC), outlining the roles and responsibilities of each Department with respect to international visits involving the Governor General, and detailing the responsibility of GAC for reimbursing eligible expenses incurred by the OSGG for both incoming and outgoing visits;
- With respect to the Government of Canada requested official diplomatic visit to the Middle East:
 - the OSGG's estimated budget for expenses eligible in accordance with the MOU, approved by GAC;
 - the OSGG's invoice to GAC related to the planning advance portion of the visit;
 - the OSGG's invoice to GAC related to the official portion of the visit;
 - the OSGG's actual detailed budget for eligible expenses including detailed information on expenses related to OSGG employee travel and overtime;
 - supporting invoices for expenses other than overtime and travel to the Middle East.

OSGG is a small Federal Government Department of just over 160 employees who, like other public servants, are subject to Public Service Collective Agreements and whose travel is undertaken in accordance with the National Joint Council Travel Directive. As invoices are not available with respect to employee travel and overtime, OSGG has provided a breakdown of these expenses in an effort to provide the Committee with additional detailed information to support the advance and visit invoices sent to GAC in accordance with the MOU (see attached). Please note that in order to protect the personal and private information of employees some information has been provided in aggregate format.

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We would like to take this opportunity to clarify the role of the OSGG when it comes to official international travel. The Governor General undertakes official international travel only at the request of the Prime Minister, and in support of the Government of Canada's international foreign policy and diplomatic objectives. On rare occasions when Governors General are invited to travel internationally to attend third party events outside Canada in their capacity as Governor General, permission from the Government of Canada is sought prior to accepting any invitation.

The planning and execution of such visits require that OSGG collaborate closely with partner Departments who are responsible for specific elements of the visits. In the majority of cases, as you will note from the List of Official Foreign Visits, the lead department is Global Affairs Canada. Once the objectives of the visit are determined by the Government of Canada, the OSGG collaborates with its partners and Canadian Missions abroad on the development of programming and communications for these visits. In the case that the Government of Canada approves the establishment of a Canadian delegation to support the visit's objectives and program, the OSGG leads the coordination of such delegation in collaboration with partner Departments. These delegations may include parliamentarians from all Parties and Canadian experts from various fields connected to the objectives of the visit.

With respect to the visit to the Middle East in March 2022, we feel it is important for Committee members to be aware of the role that COVID-19 played in the planning of the visit, and its impact on the expenses for which the OSGG sought reimbursement from GAC. The original December planning advance of the visit had to be cut short in order to get the employees back to Canada before the Canadian border was closed due to the spread of the Omicron variant; as a result additional return tickets had to be purchased at short notice. During the March visit, after contracting COVID-19, several employees had to quarantine for extended periods in foreign countries in accordance with the country's public health guidelines. This resulted in additional expenses related to testing costs, extended hotel stays, meal allowances, and commercial airline tickets to return to Canada. This also led to increased overtime costs as employees had to take over duties of those who were ill and in quarantine.

To the best of our knowledge, the OSGG has provided all documents within the scope of the motion passed by the Committee.

Should you have any questions concerning these materials, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



Christine MacIntyre
Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol