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Chair

Mr. Tom Lukiwski

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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC)): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

This will be the fourth meeting of government operations and estimates.

Before we hear from our witnesses, I have some business for the committee and I'd like to have some consensus on this, if possible.

The next two afternoons and evenings we will have ministers appearing before the committee. We have a request to make these appearances televised, and I would ask the committee if they would give their concurrence to allowing the meeting tomorrow evening and the meeting on Thursday afternoon to be televised.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Yes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Who is specifically requesting they be televised?

The Chair: Broadcasting.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have witnesses before us. The difficulty we have today is that because of votes we are running a little late. Normally we have 10-minute opening statements per witness. I have consulted with some of our committee members, and the consensus seems to be that we would like to have as much time as possible for questions, so I would ask both of our presenters to try to keep their comments to no more than 10 minutes a piece to allow enough time for the committee members to ask questions. Any unrepresented information can be read into the record a little later.

With that, perhaps we can start with Madam Doucet. Would you mind introducing yourself, the officials you have with you, and your statement following that, please.

Ms. Michelle Doucet (Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Services, Privy Council Office): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Michelle Doucet and I am the assistant deputy minister of corporate services at the Privy Council Office. I'm here today with Madam Karen Cahill, who is the deputy chief financial officer and the executive director of the finance planning and administrative directorate at PCO. We're delighted to be here. We look forward to answering your questions.

I'm going to begin my remarks with some context by briefly explaining the mandate of PCO and its three principal roles. The

mandate of the Privy Council Office is to serve Canada and Canadians by providing professional, non-partisan advice and support to the Prime Minister, the ministers within the Prime Minister's portfolio and cabinet. The Prime Minister is responsible for this organization.

PCO supports the development of the Government of Canada's policy, legislative, and government administration agendas, coordinates responses to issues facing the government and the country, and supports the effective operation of cabinet. PCO is led by the Clerk of the Privy Council. In addition to serving as the deputy head for PCO, the clerk also acts as secretary to cabinet and the head of the public service.

PCO has three main roles.

First, we provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister, portfolio ministers, cabinet and cabinet committees on matters of national and international importance. This includes providing advice and support on the full spectrum of policy, legislative, and government administration issues faced by the government.

Second, PCO is the secretariat to cabinet and all of its committees, except the Treasury Board, which is supported by the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Third, PCO fosters a high-performing and accountable public service.

We deliver all three roles to our people who provide advice, coordination, and support. Unlike many other departments, PCO doesn't deliver programs. We spend the funds that Parliament appropriates to us on salaries, operating costs, and services received from other government departments. As such, PCO is governed by the same financial and administrative requirements under which all departments operate.

I would also add that, like the Department of Finance and the Treasury Board Secretariat, PCO is something called the central agency, and as such, has the central coordinating role across the government to provide advice to the Prime Minister and cabinet and to ensure policy coherence and coordination on their behalf.

Now I'd like to give you some details on PCO's supplementary estimates (C) for the current fiscal year. In these supplementary estimates, PCO is seeking \$4.2 million for the following items: \$1.6 million to both complete the work related to the coordination of a government-wide communications approach for Canada's economic action plan under the former government and to begin to modernize the Prime Minister's digital presence.

Of that amount, \$1 million is for the operation of what was the communications component of the economic action plan, which ended following the 2015 election. The EAP funding would support a team of five public servants within PCO. The focus of their work since the election has been on properly archiving the appropriate records, both digital and analog, and on closing out the EAP. As well, this team continues to provide support to the communication of government priorities.

The second portion of that funding is \$0.6 million, and that's for activities relating to support of the Prime Minister's official web presence. The Privy Council Office provides support for the maintenance of the Prime Minister's Government of Canada website as well as all publishing to that site, and to the Prime Minister's Government of Canada's social media accounts.

The requirements for the site and those accounts have grown and become more complex with steady increases in volume and new features such as video, richer digital content, live streaming, and enhanced social media. These represent an additional pressure for PCO's web operations and associated IT support. The funds will be directed to meeting these requirements in support of the Prime Minister's web presence.

[Translation]

PCO is seeking \$1 million for activities related to the continued implementation of Canada's Migrant Smuggling Prevention Strategy. The Special Advisor on Human Smuggling and Illegal Migration took office in September 2010 and was charged with coordinating the Government of Canada's response to mass marine human smuggling ventures targeting Canada. Canada has implemented a whole-of-government strategy to prevent the further arrival of human smuggling vessels.

This is a priority national security file. Budget 2015 approved funding in the amount of \$44.5 million over three years to continue Canada's coordinated efforts to identify and respond to such threats. Reporting to the National Security Advisor, the Special Advisor's mandate consists in the coordination of the Government of Canada's response to marine migrant smuggling. This includes working with key domestic partners to coordinate Canada's strategy, working with key international partners to promote cooperation, and advancing Canada's engagement with governments in transit countries and in regional and international fora.

PCO is also requesting \$0.8 million for activities related to the continuation and advancement of the Border Implementation Team in support of the Beyond the Border Action Plan. By way of background, in February 2011, Canada and the U.S. issued a Declaration on a Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness. The declaration established a new long-term partnership accelerating the legitimate flow of people and goods between both countries, while strengthening security and economic competitiveness.

It focused on four areas of cooperation: addressing threats early; trade facilitation, economic growth and jobs; integrated cross-border law enforcement; and critical infrastructure and cybersecurity. This led to the announcement of the Beyond The Border Action Plan in December 2011. Consequently, concrete benefits have begun to accrue to industry and travellers through an increasingly efficient,

modernized and secure border. Continued central coordination and oversight of Border Action Plan implementation has been important for ensuring its success.

PCO is seeking \$0.2 million to support the creation of a new non-partisan, merit-based Senate appointment process. In December 2015, the government announced the establishment of a new, non-partisan, merit-based process to advise on Senate appointments. Under the new process, an Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments was established on January 19, 2016, to provide advice to the Prime Minister on candidates for the Senate.

The Independent Advisory Board is guided by public, merit-based criteria, in order to identify Canadians who would make a significant contribution to the work of the Senate. The criteria will help ensure a high standard of integrity, collaboration, and non-partisanship in the Senate. The government is moving quickly to reform this Senate and the new appointments process will be implemented in two phases.

In the first phase which is transitional, five appointments will be made to improve the representation of the provinces with the most vacancies, i.e., Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. The second phase will implement a permanent process to replenish the remaining vacancies, and will include an application process open to all Canadians.

The funding for PCO allows it to support the operations of the Independent Advisory Board and its secretariat in its work during the first transitional phase to provide advice and recommendations to the Prime Minister for his consideration.

In addition, PCO's statutory forecast increases by \$0.1 million for the salary and motor car allowance for the Minister of Democratic Institutions.

• (1555)

Following the election, the Honourable Maryam Monsef was appointed to the position of Minister of Democratic Institutions. To reflect the addition of this full ministerial position that includes both the salary and motor car allowance, a new item was included under PCO's statutory forecasts.

[English]

This completes the explanation—

The Chair: Madam Doucet, thank you very much. We're at just over 10 minutes now. I know you have yet to go into the departmental performance report, but if we could, I'd like to move on to the Public Service Commission for their presentation. We will make sure the rest of your presentation enters the record.

• (1600)

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you.

The Chair: Madam Donoghue.

Ms. Christine Donoghue (Acting President, Public Service Commission): Mr. Chair, honourable members, thank you.

I am pleased to introduce Omer Boudreau who is our corporate management vice-president at the commission.

We are pleased to be here today to discuss the Public Service Commission's departmental performance report for 2014-15 and supplementary estimates.

[*Translation*]

The mandate of the Public Service Commission is to promote and safeguard merit-based appointments, and in collaboration with other stakeholders, to protect the non-partisan nature of the public service. While the Public Service Employment Act gives appointment authority to the PSC, the legislation also calls for this authority to be delegated to deputy heads.

In a decentralized system based on the delegation of authorities, the commission fulfils its mandate by providing policy guidance and expertise, conducting effective oversight, and delivering innovative staffing and assessment services. We also work with departments and agencies to promote a non-partisan federal public service that reflects Canada's diversity and draws on talents and skills from across the country.

[*English*]

We report independently to Parliament on the overall integrity of the staffing system and non-partisanship of the public service. To that end, our 2014-15 annual report, which I notice is in front of you, was tabled in Parliament on February 23. We would be pleased to be back in front of this committee to discuss it, should the committee wish us to do so.

Today, I will be focusing my remarks on three areas. First, I would like to highlight some of the key achievements found in our departmental performance report 2014-15. Second, I would like to speak to some of the areas of our supplementary estimates (C). Third, I would like to conclude by providing you with an update of the efforts that we're making to modernize our approach to staffing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, a non-partisan public service is one in which appointments are based on merit and are free from political influence and where employees not only perform their duties in a politically impartial manner, but are also seen to do so. As part of our responsibilities, we communicate with public servants about the value of non-partisanship and remind them of their rights as well as their legal responsibilities with respect to political activities.

Any public servant who is interested in becoming a political candidate in a municipal, provincial, territorial or federal election must first obtain the permission of the commission, following its review. We approve these requests if the employee's ability to perform their duties in a politically impartial manner will not be impaired or be perceived as being impaired. In making this decision, we consider factors such as the nature of the election, the nature of the employee's duties in the organizational context, and the level and visibility of the employee's position. Approvals are often subject to conditions such as taking a leave without pay in order to seek nomination to be a candidate.

[*English*]

I'd like to turn to the staffing system which accounts for the majority of our activities and resources. We provide guidance, tools, and support services to enable hiring managers and human resource

advisers to staff effectively while meeting the intent of the Public Service Employment Act.

We also administer programs that recruit qualified Canadians from across the country. This involves extensive outreach and increased collaboration with departments and agencies, such as participating in career fairs and information sessions with academic institutions across the country. For example, over 39,000 applications were submitted under the fall federal student work experience campaign and over 6,500 students were hired.

We work closely with partners, including the office of the chief human resources officer, to create pools of qualified candidates that are available to federal organizations across the country. This collaboration helps to reduce duplication of efforts across the public service.

[*Translation*]

We continue to expand our use of new technology. Online testing now accounts for 72% of all the tests administered by the PSC. More than 92% of the PSC's second language tests were completed online. Unsupervised online testing continued to increase, representing nearly 42,000 tests in 2014-2015.

• (1605)

These tests allow applicants to take a test at a location of their choosing and to have greater access to public service jobs no matter where they live. This testing also helps to reduce barriers for persons with disabilities by allowing them to take exams from home using their own adaptive technologies.

[*English*]

Our most important platform for recruitment is our site called jobs.gc.ca. In April 2015, the system provided Canadians with a single portal to access public service jobs. Nearly 8,800 internal and external job advertisements were posted, resulting in over 530,000 applications.

We continue to look for ways to further modernize the system and support in order to improve the user experience. This is a good segue to the funds that are in supplementary estimates (C), as departments and agencies contribute to the cost of operating this platform, which explains the transfer you see in the estimates.

This consolidated system also provides the foundation to support the implementation of the Veterans Hiring Act. On July 1 last year, the legislation came into force providing medically released veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces greater access to public service jobs.

We provided training and new tools to raise awareness of the skills and competencies that veterans have to offer to the public service. We ourselves at the commission have hired two veterans to serve as navigators in guiding their colleagues through the priority entitlements and staffing system. To date, more than 94 veterans have been hired, including 15 under the new statutory entitlement which gives the highest priority to veterans who have been released for medical reasons attributable to service.

[Translation]

As part of our efforts to continuously improve our system, I would like to speak about changes that will come into effect on April 1 to simplify the staffing process. These changes build on the reforms introduced and our experience gained since 2005, with the goal of modernizing while ensuring the overall health of the staffing system.

Based on our observations over the past 10 years, we believe the staffing system has matured, along with the human resources capacity in departments and agencies. As such, we are streamlining our policies to remove duplication, going from 12 policies to one.

This single policy will more clearly articulate expectations for deputy heads and reinforce their discretion and accountability. As a result of these changes, departments and agencies will have greater scope to customize their staffing based on their operational realities and needs. Hiring managers will also have more room to exercise their judgment in their staffing decisions, and will also be accountable for their decisions.

[English]

Mr. Chair, this context in which the public service operates is constantly evolving. Departments and agencies need to be able to respond effectively to ensure that they attract the right people with the right skills at the right time.

To that end, the commission will focus on integrating its guidance and support to respond to the unique needs of organizations, while also promoting best practices across the system. We will be reducing the reporting burden, in line with the recommendations of the Auditor General's report of 2015. Deputy heads will remain accountable to the Public Service Commission for the way in which they exercise their discretion, and we will continue to oversee the integrity of the staffing system through audits and investigations.

However, we will be adjusting our oversight activities to be more nimble in order to support continuous improvement. For instance, audits will shift from reviewing individual organizations to taking a system-wide approach with a focus on areas that need attention.

• (1610)

Mr. Chair, for more than 100 years, the Public Service Commission has been entrusted by Parliament with the mandate of safeguarding merit and non-partisanship in the public service. We will continue to foster strong collaborative relationships with parliamentarians, deputy heads, bargaining agents, and other stakeholders so that Canadians continue to have confidence in their non-partisan and professional public service and to benefit from the skills and competencies to deliver results.

We'd be pleased to take questions at this point. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Doucet and Madam Donoghue.

We'll go now to the seven-minute round and Madam Ratansi.

I'll remind all members that the time allowed for questions includes questions and answers.

Madam Ratansi, please.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Thank you. I'll be quite quick with my questions.

Madam Donoghue, my question is for you.

The Public Service Commission of Canada is asking, under vote 1c, to transfer a total of \$504,000 from Parks Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for the public service resource systems. I guess that is a recruitment system that you have.

Is this mandatory for the agencies to do?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: The system that we entertain is mandatory in fact for all departments that are subject to the Public Service Employment Act. When we come to Parks Canada and the CFIA, these organizations are not subject to the PSEA, the Public Service Employment Act. That is why they are paying for the services. They have chosen to use the services that we offer.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: You presented the view that with the aging population, with retirement, the challenges that the Public Service Commission faces across government.... How have you been able to meet the challenges of a very diverse population and reflect that diversity in your hiring practices?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: As the public service is responsible for the implementation of the Public Service Employment Act, we also have a responsibility for employment equity that is shared with diverse partners within the system. We have basically, through policy and through the use of legislation, been able to indicate that there is a possibility to advertise positions, with targeted intent, towards employment equity diversity groups. That in itself has allowed for easier access of diverse groups into public service jobs.

The other thing we do is conduct studies to look at what is happening within those communities, what their workforce availability is, and whether or not we are getting the right number of applicants and whether the jobs are being offered to the employment equity groups.

We have studies that will be coming out soon, in 2016, that will demonstrate some of the results we have. We have seen some increase in certain communities, but we recognize that there is still some more work to be done. We also do a lot of outreach to create more awareness and to inform departments as to how they can more easily get people on board from the employment equity groups.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: This gives rise to two questions, then. How accessible is your system? How easy is it for people who wish to apply but may have linguistic skill problems? I guess it is bilingual. That is number one. Number two is, how easy is it to access, and what monitoring mechanisms do you have in place to ensure that the PSC is successful?

I was looking at the audit reports and some of the observations, and the audit recommends that the monitoring has to be done and be more stringent. You're an umbrella for a lot of these agencies, so could you give me some idea as to the ease of access to that system and the monitoring and how you gauge success?

• (1615)

Ms. Christine Donoghue: The ease of access was facilitated through the fact that we integrated a single window. That basically made it very clear. Having a single window that Canadians can all go through to see what jobs are available in the public service is definitely a benefit.

Now, we are actually in the process of reviewing, once you know where the single window is, how easy it is to actually enter into the system. We recognize at this point in time that it could be a better user experience. As I was saying, we are looking at better ways of improving that system which was put in place in 2015, but we are also looking at what it would mean to actually do the system from the user perspective, as distinct from the government perspective.

We're looking at continuous improvement, facilitating easier language, trying to get rid of a lot of the very bureaucratic language, and seeing whether we can do a system that would, by the criteria the potential candidates could put in, more easily direct them towards jobs that would be suitable for their skill sets.

The system works well. Every department is using it. As well, we're asking departments to monitor a lot more the activities they have within that system. But we always recognize that it should be a bit more user-friendly, and we're going to be testing that in the months to come.

One thing we've also done is we've streamlined a lot of our policy requirements. We were an extremely rules-based system. As of April 1 we're really going back to the basic intent of the legislation, which was very clear and gave a lot of flexibility. One thing we're going to do is adapt that system so that it removes any extra information that is no longer required on the basis of policy.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: How many minutes do I have?

The Chair: It's about 45 seconds.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: If you can, answer this for the second round: how do you measure your success? What is the measuring mechanism you use to show that we have hired the diverse population, whether it's the disabled, visible minorities, etc.?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Our system allows us to do a compilation of a lot of data. It allows us to actually measure

through the data. This is data that I could provide to the committee to demonstrate exactly how we can use it and what the data is showing us. Then, we share it with all the deputy heads. Also, in conjunction with the human resources office, we try to encourage different approaches.

This is information that I could provide more specifically to the committee, which would outline much more detail.

The Chair: Thank you. I request that you do that, Madam Donoghue.

Mr. McCauley, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

Thanks for the questions, Ms. Ratansi.

You note that on July 1, the Veterans Hiring Act came into force, and since then 94 veterans in total have been hired. What percentage is that of new hires, and how many have actually been hired by Veterans Affairs?

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is it 15? Was that 15 of those released who were hired under this special act, or is it 94 in total—it just happened to be that—and 15 under the statutory entitlement?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Omer, do you have the specific numbers here?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That is fine. I realize they're very specific.

Ms. Christine Donoghue: In fact, 11 of the 15 were hired by DND. DND is probably one of the departments that rehire the most veterans or CAF-released members. Just as a reminder, some members are released because they were injured during the course of their tenure, and some are released for other medical reasons that are not related to service. There is a different level of priority.

We have two who were hired at Health Canada. As I indicated, we at the commission have as well hired some veterans to help manage the system. We know that there's continuous improvement as well.

One thing we know is that we've referred a lot more veterans, but not all veterans who have registered are necessarily without employment at this point in time. Some of them are employed but can benefit by being on the priority system and being able to look at whether or not their situation can be improved by entering into the public service. Thus, although many them have been referred, some of them choose to not follow the reference but still remain eligible for the system.

We're hopeful, as we continue to grow the communication and the outreach department and as we're able to demonstrate the positive experience and the number of skill sets these veterans and CAF-released members have, that more and more departments will start engaging in the hiring of veterans.

• (1620)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Yes. I understand they have a very sought-after skill set for leadership. I realize you may not have the number, so please get back to me, for Veterans Affairs, on how many were hired.

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Yes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Out of this 94, can you provide as well what percentage of new hires that actually is, and how many veterans, please, have actually applied for that?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Yes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

You note a new car allowance for the Minister of Democratic Institutions due to the elevation from, I assume, minister of state to a full minister.

Were there any other examples of ministers of state receiving a car allowance because of an elevation or any other reasons?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I'm going to ask Ms. Cahill to answer that question. She will talk about the Privy Council Office, and then perhaps a broader application.

Ms. Karen Cahill (Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Services, Privy Council Office): Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

For ministers of state, the Parliament of Canada Act planned for a \$2,000 motor car allowance. In previous years, PCO, the Privy Council Office, had ministers of state where we allocated and added into our estimates the \$2,000 amount.

Of course, with the election, Minister Monsef is a full minister, so that's why we have added the statutory item to our supplementary estimates (C).

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I probably didn't ask the question properly. Were there any other ministers of state elevated to full minister who are receiving the added \$80,000 car allowances, like that one?

Ms. Karen Cahill: Not for PCO.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Certainly across the government there was, and I think that is your question.

Those other ministers would include ministers Qualtrough, Duncan, Hajdu, and Chagger.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

You mentioned, and several times there was mention about ensuring non-partisanship of the public service. Obviously, everyone has to work toward that.

We have seen some examples not only with a huge amount of spending by public service unions in the last election as registered by Elections Canada, but we saw an incident where the Prime Minister went into the foreign affairs building and the public service was surrounding him, all cheering, etc. A huge crowd came out.

What are you doing to ensure non-partisanship of the public service? I realize you mentioned you send out memos, you discuss with them, but what are you doing to ensure non-partisanship within the public service?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: There is part 7 of the legislation that we administer, which is very clearly dedicated to political activities and candidacy.

Over and above all of this, we are doing a lot of work with Treasury Board in the context of values and ethics. There's a very

fine line when it comes to values and ethics, and also partisan activities per se.

When these things happen, we do a lot of work within the system to actually analyze what constitutes a political activity, and whether or not there's somebody who has been seen as not being able to continue to exercise their duties.

That's where the difference lies. When there's a group activity, there are a lot of things that are related to the values and ethics aspect, which basically falls within the scope of the deputy head to continue to brief and to educate the staff.

We do that as well. What we've done is gone back, and working directly with PCO have looked at continuing to inform public servants of the duty they have to act in a non-partisan manner.

When we have egregious cases, or when there are obvious...or we can identify individuals, we do have the possibility of conducting investigations to see whether or not there has been an issue of conduct and take the corrective measures that are necessary at that point.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, I think I'll cut you off there. We only have about 10 seconds left.

Mr. Weir, for seven minutes, please.

• (1625)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Thanks very much.

I have a question for the Privy Council Office. You're seeking \$1.6 million for the communication strategy around the economic action plan as well as to modernize the Prime Minister's digital presence.

Could you provide any kind of breakdown of the money between those two initiatives?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I'm happy to do that. Let me divide it into two categories.

As I said in my opening remarks, we are asking for \$1 million to complete the work under the economic action plan, which of course concluded following the election in October. That was a stand-alone website that was supported by a team of...how many FTEs, Karen? Remind me.

Ms. Karen Cahill: For the EAP?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes.

Ms. Karen Cahill: It was four FTEs.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: That's what I thought.

FTE means a public servant. There were four folks who were involved in the public service in supporting that work and led I believe by a director. As I also said, that work wound down after the election and they have been retasked to support the priorities of the current government and the Prime Minister.

Then there is a piece costing \$600,000, which is in support of the Prime Minister's digital presence. The Prime Minister has a Government of Canada website and other social media accounts. That's what that money is for. It operates 24-7, 365 days a year. The money will be used to hire two additional people to work on it in communications. It will be used to acquire licences, and hire a contractor to assist us in things such as live streaming and more cutting-edge technology support. We have also contributed, over the last year and a half, approximately \$1 million of our own money in addition to what we're asking for today.

Mr. Erin Weir: I'm wondering if you could tell us a bit about what this modernized digital presence will look like. How would the success of that initiative be judged?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question. It's a good question.

Most of us increasingly live our lives through technology and on the Internet. Government has to work hard at staying relevant and being able to connect to Canadians. Technology evolves far more rapidly than we could ever keep up.

One of the pieces the Government of Canada has had to get its head around, especially in the last five or six years, is how we harness what we used to call web 2.0 technology and social media, and imbed that in the Government of Canada context. It's different in the public sector. We have obligations that reflect our values and ethics, like official languages and accessibility. If you have a handicap, say you can't see or hear, we need to make sure that as the Government of Canada that is accessible. Security matters and privacy are important considerations.

As we build the digital presence, we work within that operating framework, in that we're trying to satisfy Canadians' thirst for information and for knowledge. In the past it used to be that a lot was print media, but now they want to see it. Sometimes they want videos. Some people get all of their news via Twitter. I'm not a Twitter person, but I can assure you that many of my colleagues are Twitter people. My children live on YouTube. They will often report to me what they hear about what the government has done because they're watching YouTube.

The challenge for us is how to have a Government of Canada display on YouTube, on Twitter, or on Facebook in a way that respects the values and ethics of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Erin Weir: It strikes me that the Prime Minister has a fairly active presence on Twitter as it stands right now. The previous prime minister had a whole online TV channel devoted to covering his activities. You alluded to that. I guess I'm wondering what's new in this modernization of the digital presence. Is it simply more videos and more pictures? I'm asking for as much specificity as possible.

• (1630)

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I think that's a good question.

As you know, Prime Minister Trudeau has been the Prime Minister since November 4, and he is in the process of developing how he would want to communicate through the Government of Canada website. He had, prior to becoming the Prime Minister, his own social media and website tools for political purposes, but those

are not part of what we do at PCO. The money we're seeking is not for that. It is for building the Government of Canada capability.

We're a bit behind in that regard, and this is to help us begin to catch up. Let me give you an example of beginning to catch up.

In this case I'll speak to the previous prime minister. We were asked, I think it was in September 2014, if we had the capacity to live stream an event for Prime Minister Harper. We did not have that imbedded in the department, but we recognized it was an important Government of Canada event and nothing to do with partisan politics. We recognized that we needed to be able to provide that service to the then prime minister and to any other prime minister who would be in office. That's what we're starting to do, and we are a bit behind.

The Chair: We're at the seven minutes.

We have Mr. Graham for the final seven-minute round.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Thank you.

My question is for Ms. Donoghue.

There's an investigation sub-activity that conducts investigations, and I'm reading directly, "into allegations of improper political activities by public servants to ensure the respect of the principle of non-partisanship." Fair enough. According to the department's performance report, only 66% of investigations were completed in the 215-day standard, out of a target of 80%.

I have a number of questions. I'll ask a couple of them quickly.

How many actual investigations does that cover, and why did it take 215 days to investigate them?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: I'll ask my colleague, Omer, to respond.

Mr. Omer Boudreau (Vice-President, Corporate Management Branch, Public Service Commission): There are a number of reasons that it took so long. We were getting investigation requests and, while working through that, realized that our processes could be better, so we made a commitment to streamline the process for investigation. Over the last few years, we've brought down the time it takes to carry out an investigation significantly, something in the order of 20% since 2014-15. We're now looking at undertaking some process, a re-engineering exercise, lean management, for example, to continue to do that. It's an ongoing process, but we're slowly working on it to reduce the amount of time that it takes.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: How many investigations does that actually represent in real numbers? If it's 66% versus 80%, is it two out of three versus four out of five, or is there actually a large number of people we're dealing with here?

Mr. Omer Boudreau: In the year that we're reporting on, we had 82 cases that were investigated.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Out of how many people?

Mr. Omer Boudreau: How many people?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Was it 82 investigations of different people or was some person investigated 40 times?

Mr. Omer Boudreau: No, those were 82 distinct cases that were investigated, so 82 different complaints.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I see, okay.

Has the PSC noticed a change in the number of issues related to staffing and improper political activities in the past five years? To go back farther, is there a trend line that we can see?

Mr. Omer Boudreau: There is a trend that we can observe. We have seen an increase in the number of cases of fraud allegations. Now, when we talk about fraud in the context of the Public Service Employment Act, it's not necessarily always the same as a criminal fraud case. We're talking about instances where someone might have falsified documents, misrepresented themselves in one way or another, cheated on exams, for example, that type of thing. We have seen an increase in the number of complaints and resulting investigations in the area that we call fraud, which I've just described.

We are seeing fewer investigations in cases of error, omissions, or improper conduct. We believe that's because the public service, the department deputies, and so on, are getting increasingly mature in their approach to staffing in the public service. The act changed in 2005. After that, there was a bit of a learning period. We're seeing fewer cases where there are allegations of error, omissions, or improper conduct.

• (1635)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: If you look forward five years from now, where are you headed in terms of the number of investigations, how long they would take, and what your realistic target would be?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: We had an external panel who came in and did a review of some of the processes with us to see where we could increase our capacity or better our processes. Right now we are in the process of reviewing those. We are doing a lot of process mapping to see where we could improve our procedures.

The other aspect is we're doing a lot more outreach to departments to make them understand, and a lot more education about what constitutes fraud. We demonstrate what best practices departments should use to avoid fraudulent behaviour in the context of staffing. That in itself has proven to be of benefit. We are doing a lot more outreach when it comes to prevention in the context of the system.

We are going to continue to look at different procedures that can be used to shorten.... Not everything has to be done through a full-fledged investigation. For instance, in the past, if somebody were to admit to a fault committed, an investigation was the standard way. Now we have shorter processes when we have people who admit to having committed fraud, for instance. We are taking more diverse measures.

The important thing is that when we operate in the context of investigation, we fully recognize the importance of balance and the rights of all individuals to be heard and to be able to give their cases. We are looking for judicial fairness in the context of the processes we use. Sometimes these investigations are harder and more complex, and involve more people, and sometimes it's a one-on-

one situation. Others involve a number of candidates in a broader process, which takes more time.

It varies because it is not necessarily a one-size-fits-all type of process, but at the same time, when you look at the number of appointments that happen within the public service in general, the number of investigations is minimal, which means that the system is actually doing very well and is very healthy. The investigations are still there to allow us to ensure that we are dealing with the most egregious cases.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: For the 34% that take longer than seven and a half months, how long can they drag on for?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: We have some investigations that take a few weeks, as we have investigations that are more complex in nature and require a lot more witnesses to be interviewed or heard, and we also have to respect their availability. We've had cases of investigations that have gone on for over 18 months. Right now, we are really working to see how we can better our processes. For instance, we have done a lot more paper investigations, but we are constantly looking at best practices and learning from other departments that have investigative powers to see what they have done to streamline their process.

The Chair: We'll have to cut it off there.

Now we are going into a five-minute round, but I should inform all committee members that, because our witnesses are here for the full two hours, after we go through the first rotation of seven, five, and three, we'll go back to seven-minute rounds, so those of you who have follow-up questions should have plenty of time to get them in.

We'll start the five-minute rounds with Monsieur Blaney.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses from the Public Service Commission and the Privy Council.

My first question is addressed to Ms. Donoghue, who is the Acting President of the Public Service Commission.

In your report, we see the impact of our budget plan between 2011 and 2015 on the total number of public servants. It went from 216,000 to 195,000.

I note that the highest number of people hired last year were in the national capital region. Have you established a mechanism to ensure that there is a balance between the number of public servants in the national capital region and in the other regions? Is there a mechanism to ensure that there is a balance in the number of public servants in the regions, so as to avoid having a large concentration in the national capital region? Could you give us your comments in this regard?

•(1640)

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Basically, the staffing mechanisms and decisions, as well as where positions will be staffed, are not the commission's responsibility. These decisions are made by the deputy heads of organizations. However, we monitor the situation to see where staffing takes place, which allows us to provide that information to deputy heads so that they are aware of activities throughout the system.

The data does indeed show that there has been a decrease in the size of the public service as of 2011. Even if staffing activities have begun again, the size of the public service has remained the same as at that time. Staffing has begun again, but its purpose is to fill positions that became vacant in the normal way. So the size of the public service does not increase. When you see an increase in the activity, it gives the impression that the entire public service is growing. At this time, this is a function of the planning of the deputy heads. When positions become vacant in the regions, the commission works with its regional offices to help with the recruiting and create processes to facilitate hiring in the regions.

We have done something else. We often hear it said that recruitment in the regions can be difficult. In light of the new policy aimed at ensuring a better balance and facilitating recruitment in the regions, as well as to resist the reflex of bringing positions back to Ottawa, we have made our policies more flexible to allow for exceptions in the context of a much more regional approach to staffing, under the direction of the department head.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you very much for your answer.

I'm going to move on immediately to the Privy Council representative.

Is there coordination at the Privy Council to ensure that the Canadian public service is distributed uniformly throughout Canada?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes, in a very general way.

[English]

I said in my opening remarks that one of the roles of the Privy Council Office was to house Michael Wernick, who is the head of the public service, and to foster a high-performing public service.

In PCO we actually have one of our branches that is called the business transformation and renewal secretariat. Its mandate is to take a whole-of-government approach, which is to step back and see what's happening across the government, whether it be with respect to recruitment, to management mechanisms, or to compensation mechanisms.

We have a very important governance housed in that, and that is the management committee of deputy ministers, who meet on a regular basis to consider how the totality of the public service is operating. They're supported by very important departments, such as the Public Service Commission, the office of the chief human resources officer, and by other portions of the Treasury Board Secretariat. To answer your previous question, they will have a look at how many public servants we have in the regions and whether there is balance across the country. What is, to speak to Madam Ratansi's question, the balance in diversity? Are we getting the kind of talent that we need? Is there a problem in recruiting, for instance,

women into the technology category, into the CS category? Does that go back into the university recruitment level? It's to dig through that.

In short, yes, but it's at what I would call a very high senior executive level.

•(1645)

The Chair: We'll have to cut you off there. We're past the five minutes.

Mr. Ayoub.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here with us to answer our questions. I'm going to begin with you, Ms. Doucet.

You provided an overview of the mandate of the Privy Council Office and of the type of work you do, but could you give me a bit more information on how the internal services of your office operate? How do you function internally?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to talk about that, because as the ADM of corporate services, I am uniquely positioned to do so. As we said before, our main function at the Privy Council Office is to provide advice and support and coordination. We do that for fairly senior level decision-makers—the Prime Minister and his portfolio and the Clerk of the Privy Council.

We take an approach that we want those folks to focus on their work, on their day job, and that we support them on a corporate services basis completely. My colleague who runs the secretariat that I just discussed, the business transformation renewal secretariat, doesn't have to worry about looking after the mechanics of her human resources staffing or her budgets or any of her other corporate responsibilities, because my folks do that for her.

We have one-stop shopping in corporate services at the Privy Council Office. It includes all of the internal services that you would normally think of: finance—Karen is the head of my finance group—contracting, building facilities management, human resources, access to information and privacy, parliamentary returns for PCO. It also includes things you might not necessarily think about, such as passports and visas for people going on trips, security operations—security is really important at the Privy Council Office, and there is a workforce dedicated to doing it. In our legal services group we have lawyers, like other departments, but we also have a dedicated group that works on something called cabinet confidences. We include that in our internal services. Then finally, of course, there would be communication services and what I would call the senior level management oversight for the department, including the audit group, the audit division, and the clerk's office.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Thank you.

I am going to put another question to Ms. Donoghue about her organization.

In your introduction you talked about the fact that a public servant who wants to run for political office must ask for permission, and this is true whether they intend to run at the federal, provincial or municipal level.

Today is International Women's Day. Since it is difficult to recruit women into the political arena, is there a plan in place to encourage them to get involved in politics? Is there something that deters them from doing so? What is the plan for employees with regard to their potential will and freedom to run for political office? How does that play out?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: First, I must say that the commission recognizes the right of Canadians, whether they are public servants or not, to participate in political activities. It recognizes that that is a fundamental right. However, we must ensure a balance to preserve another fundamental principle, that of non-partisanship in the public service.

When a public servant wants to run for office, at whatever level of government, that person must obtain the permission of the commission to do so. The reason for that is that we need to see what the impact of that initiative would be on preserving non-partisanship. It is very rare that permission is not granted. When we grant a permission, it comes with conditions that are often discussed with the employer of the potential candidate so as to define how that person will reintegrate their position if not elected. We take into consideration the nature of the position involved and its visibility.

Basically, the purpose is not to restrict the capacity of a public servant to run for office, quite the opposite. We have to make sure that if the person is not elected, he or she will be able to reintegrate their positions without adversely affecting the perception of the impartiality of the public service. Generally, when someone is elected, especially at the federal and provincial levels, the law requires that they resign from the public service because they will be accepting another full time job.

There are no particular provisions applying to different kinds of persons. Everyone is treated the same way. There is no different treatment, whether it is a man or a woman or in consideration of any other circumstance.

• (1650)

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Are the rules very—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we'll have to cut it off there. We're going to Mr. Weir in a three-minute round, and after that, we'll go back to a seven-minute round and there will be enough time for four more questions, if my clock is correct.

Mr. Weir, you have three minutes, so if you could, keep the questions as precise as possible.

Mr. Erin Weir: Sure.

PCO is asking for \$200,000 to set up an advisory board for Senate appointments. I wonder if you could provide some information about how much this board is going to cost going forward.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question.

Going forward, we will be seeking \$1.5 million in 2016-17. Maybe I'll ask Karen to explain how that will manifest itself in the estimates process.

Ms. Karen Cahill: Certainly. When the Senate appointments TB submission went to the Treasury Board, it was too late to add the information in our main estimates, so you will not have seen the \$1.5 million for 2016-17 in the PCO's main estimates, which were tabled on February 26.

What PCO will do, in future supplementary estimates for 2016-17, is present the \$1.5 million for Senate appointments. Ongoing, it will be in our main estimates.

Mr. Erin Weir: Will that be the full cost of the advisory board?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Perhaps I will just talk about... I've just given you one year of information. Maybe I could be a bit more helpful.

The total funding that the PCO will be seeking for the next six fiscal years will be \$5.4 million, and thereafter it will be \$700,000 ongoing. What is this going to be used for? It's going to be used, really, for two things.

One is for the board itself, the honourable Canadians who have let their names stand to do this work. We have some permanent federal members, and then, as you know, there will be members named for every province. We are paying a fairly modest per diem to do this work, but we are paying them to do it, as well as paying their travel expenses when they need to come together to have conversations. We will, however, take advantage of technology whenever possible to keep expenses to a minimum.

There is the cost of standing up the board, which is something that you see in the \$200,000 in these estimates—standing up that committee to fill the most immediate vacancies.

As I said, we're looking for money over six fiscal years, and that's based on the projection of vacancies in the Senate based on age of retirement. If you do the analysis on that, you have a kind of immediate work plan.

The second portion of the money will be used to pay for the public servants who will support this and act as a secretariat. We'll be absorbing some of that cost ourselves and have been already, but it will mean more work, because prior to this, PCO really didn't have a very big role in the appointment of senators. This is a new functionality for us, supporting the work of the committee and the technology required to support it as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I offer my apologies to the committee; I missed Mr. McCauley in the five-minute round.

I can pretend I was like Speaker Regan and say that you were heckling and so I cut you out of a question, but that just wouldn't be fair.

We'll go back to Mr. McCauley for a five-minute question-and-answer period, and then we'll get into the final seven-minute round.

Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

You mentioned \$800,000 for the border implementation team to secure the border. I'm curious against what and whom you would secure the U.S. border. Do we not spend billions already on another department to secure us against invasion from the U.S.?

• (1655)

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair, and I am grateful for it.

Maybe what I'll do is take a step back. I believe it was in February 2011 that Canada and the United States announced they were going to work together to establish a new long-term partnership to accelerate the legitimate flow of people and goods between both countries, while strengthening security and economic competitiveness. The plan for that was crystallized later on that year, in December 2011.

When we talk about the border, the border is a complicated place. We have people going back and forth for business and for pleasure and leisure all the time. Both governments are interested in finding ways to facilitate legitimate trade and the legitimate flow of business. Each country is driven by its own unique considerations, one of which is security.

The plan was quite a complicated one, and it involved on both sides of the border a multi-departmental approach to implementing it, including the modernization of complicated IT systems.

The work has been ongoing since late 2011. That work has been housed in Canada at the Privy Council Office because of our unique bird's-eye perspective and our ability to pull together all of the departments. It has come along well and has matured. We are seeking funding in these estimates and going over two years. We'll be in a position over the next year to synchronize the review of the work done to figure out a way forward.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

You have \$1 million for the wind-down of Canada's economic action plan. I know it was much maligned over the years for the spending.

On what are you going to spend \$1 million on winding it down when it's basically ended, and we have a commitment from the new government that there will be zero partisan advertising? Could you explain what \$1 million is going to buy us when we've basically turned it off? What value do Canadians receive from this \$1-million plan?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question.

The economic action plan was a one-stop shopping website where the priorities of the government were put so Canadians could go to one place to see what was going on with the government.

I've spoken about the winding down of it subsequent to the election. As you know, the election occurred in October, which meant this program operated up until the election, which is to say the

first six months of the government's fiscal year. The funds would be required to support the work public servants did in accordance with the communications policy of the Government of Canada. Subsequent to that, they had to do the archiving and the winding down of it.

That is not as easy as it sounds, but it certainly wouldn't take the entire \$1 million. If you pro-rate the \$1 million, you can imagine that if the work were being done over the first six months of the fiscal year, you'd need half of it to support the work of the public servants working on it then.

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, you may want to save that for the final seven-minute round as we're out of time. I'm sorry.

We'll go to the final seven-minute round and we'll start with Mr. Grewal.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of you for your testimony today.

My question is for Ms. Doucet.

What are the macro level challenges facing your organization in anticipating the delivery of your mandate?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chair, I suspect when I respond that my colleagues to the right will nod their heads.

Ms. Donoghue described the launch of the new website for the Public Service Commission last April. I would tell you that for folks in my position across government, probably their biggest preoccupation is technology. Technology evolves rapidly. It is a critical tool for all of us.

I talked earlier about how doing technology in government is different from doing it in the private sector, because they operate in a different value system. Candidly, the private sector folks are not necessarily going to be preoccupied with official languages and with accessibility the way the Government of Canada will be.

I'll obviously just speak for PCO, but I suspect it's similar in other departments. We have two portions in technology. One is the everyday run, making sure that the systems in which everybody does their work are up and operating, and that they are operating safely, because we're a pretty target-rich environment for cybersecurity, for the bad guys who are out there. We have to make sure we have the right kinds of firewalls that protect the folks who are working within that, but at the same time that they don't stymie their work. That's the day-to-day operations. Involved in the day-to-day operations is being able to do maintenance and patching and finding windows of opportunity when we can do that, and not disturbing the workflow.

Then, of course, the second piece is innovation. If the clerk of the public service wants to reach out to universities for post-secondary recruitment, and he wants to do Google Hangouts, if he came to me right now and said, "Michelle, I need you to make this happen for me", I would say "Okay". The money that we're seeking in these supplementary estimates is to begin to support us to do that.

I spoke earlier about live streaming. Right now we are supported in that by contract help. I want to be able to build the capacity within the Privy Council Office to have that embedded, to be able to respond in a nimble and agile way to Canadians who want to use technology to connect with their government.

I would say technology in being able to move in a safe but nimble way is probably my biggest preoccupation these days.

• (1700)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Does it make the government more efficient, your office more efficient with the investment in technology and innovation?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: For sure. As you know, we are the secretariat to cabinet. There's cabinet and the various cabinet committees. Ministers can't always be in Ottawa for cabinet committee meetings, and sometimes they want to call in. I've talked about the Internet, but let me talk about telecommunications. If you have a minister in another part of the world and the Prime Minister wants to speak with him or her, or there needs to be a meeting of a subcommittee on whatever topic, ministers need to be able to call in safely and securely. We have worked very hard over the last year with critical government partners such as PSPC and Shared Services Canada—a great partner—to put that in place. We are now a bit victims of our own success because now ministers are asking whether we can do secure video conferencing which requires lots of bandwidth and a different set-up altogether.

But these are the times in which we live, and in terms of creating better government, it creates more effective government.

Mr. Raj Grewal: According to the departmental performance report, you guys did a review after the incident that occurred in Ottawa. What recommendations have you guys implemented from that review process and what specific changes, after the action review, have actually taken place?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question.

One of the things we did, which is something that we will always do to keep our security posture current, is that we worked across the government to make sure that business continuity plans were updated, streamlined, and linked to revised critical functionality. October 22 was a wake-up call in that regard.

At PCO we built our emergency response plans. We rebuilt them, and we reviewed them and the communications protocols. Awareness and training were enhanced. When an alarm went off a couple of weeks ago, the first question I asked myself was, “What is this? Is this a fire, or is this an earthquake, or is this a shooter?”

I wouldn't have thought to do that on October 22, but now as a result of that training, you have a different security protocol. In the event of an earthquake how you behave is different from how you behave in the event of a shooter. It's important to have education and awareness on that.

From a communications perspective, PCO has clarified its information exchange processes with other emergency response providers in making sure we're linked with the public safety operation centre and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Treasury Board Secretariat is the employer of the public service and has an important role in any events like that.

We made physical improvements, but security considerations preclude me from going into the details on those. Some of them are perhaps evident and some less evident.

I think I'll stop at that.

• (1705)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're just about out of time. Perhaps one of your colleagues can follow up with a question if you have one.

Monsieur Blaney, for seven minutes.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

I want to say that I support the \$1 million for activities and for implementation of the strategy to prevent the further arrival of human smuggling vessels. I think it is well managed, and the special adviser is doing a fantastic job.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to go back to the question raised by Mr. Ayoub concerning the Public Service Commission. He spoke of the opportunity for public servants of running for office.

I'd like to draw a parallel with the provincial public service. I have colleagues who are provincial elected representatives. When the time comes for them to leave political life, it will probably be too late, but the their status as public servants has been maintained. However, paragraph 3.21 of page 72 of your report states: “A public servant ceases to be an employee of the public service on the day on which they are elected in a federal, provincial or territorial election”.

Why be as uncompromising toward someone who would like to return to their position after having been in politics?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: That is a valid question and I thank you for asking it.

That is the legislative framework that was given to us by Parliament when that act was adopted. That was the context for that decision.

Allow me to give you some of the rationale behind this. Take the general career path of a public servant. When he asks for leave, the maximum that is granted is often five years. It may be a question of equity. We have often wondered how best to manage this. The matter does not arise if someone is elected at the municipal level, but only if he is elected at the federal or provincial level. The reason for that is probably that those are terms that more or less comply with the same standards as for any other type of leave granted to public servants.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Very well.

In 2006, I had to resign my position when I was elected to a minority government. At that time, I would have liked to keep my status with regard to that position which I liked very much. Today, I have turned the page and moved on to something else. But I wanted to mention it.

To give people the opportunity of running for office, perhaps you could grant them the status referred to as “indeterminate”, which would be an important asset for a public servant.

I'd like to go back to the Privy Council Office.

[English]

I would like to come back to the process regarding the appointment of senators.

[Translation]

Can you enlighten me in that regard?

You said that you were seeking an additional \$200,000 for the Senate, but you spoke about costs of \$5.4 million over the next six years.

Could you tell me more about those costs? Will the recommendations in this report be made public?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for that question.

[English]

I apologize for any confusion. I was attempting to answer the other member's question about going forward how much money we would be spending. It's probably a little confusing because you don't have those figures before you. I know what those are, and as Karen explained, they're not in any of the estimates documents before you right now. But I can assure the committee, whenever I come to the committee and I know that these are going to be before you, I will always share those with you so you can have as big a picture as possible.

What I don't have with me today is the specific breakdown of the \$1.5 million that we would spend in the next fiscal year, the one that will start in about three weeks. I know we'll be seeking that in supplementary estimates. We'll be seeking over six years \$5.4 million, and in the next fiscal year we'll be seeking funding of \$1.5 million as part of that \$5.4 million.

If it's the will of the committee, I'm very happy to provide a breakdown of how we would propose to spend that money.

• (1710)

Hon. Steven Blaney: My understanding, as you said, is that this \$5.4 million over six years is to cover the expenses of the appointees, Canadians who have been appointed to make recommendations, as well as creating a group of civil servants who will provide support. Do you have any idea of how many FTEs will actually be created for this kind of secretariat, this new structure?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: It's my understanding and I believe it's four additional FTEs who will be hired to support the work of the committee over the next five years. You can appreciate that in the first couple of years of the work, because it's a whole new process, they'll be pretty busy with that. Then as they get better at it and more efficient and regularize it, the workload will be less onerous.

It's four new public servants at PCO to do this work, plus the technology support, and then of course the fees for the committee members' participation.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes. It's a process that was already ongoing without this structure, but now this is a new structure and this certainly is reflected in those costs.

To get back to beyond the border, is it correct to say that you have the mandate to coordinate the overall operation of the government?

Can you be a little more specific on your role in the implementation of the initial agreement and the pre-clearance agreement that was signed in March 2015? I have reason to believe that this is why you are seeking additional funding.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: As I said, the beyond the border action plan was announced in late December 2011 by the then prime minister and the then president of the United States, and I suspect the member is fairly acquainted with it. The role of PCO since that time has been to, as I said, coordinate the efforts of the department. What did that mean in the first couple of years? There were a number of initiatives that needed cabinet approval, that needed policy cover. What we saw were multiple departments coming before cabinet on one topic. They needed somebody to organize and coordinate that, so PCO played that role. It couldn't do it within its existing framework because the existing framework's role is to play a challenge function in proposals that come in to us, and that's what the existing PCO staff did. We built this new function that could play the coordinating role of all of the various departments involved. Those would include Public Safety, the RCMP, the then citizenship and immigration, now the Department of Immigration and Refugees, and the CBSA. The span of initiatives included cargo security, trusted traders, cross-border travellers, and—

The Chair: Madam Doucet, I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off. I apologize for that but we're about a minute and a half over time. Perhaps in your subsequent answers to other committee members, you might be able to incorporate some of the answer you were providing to Monsieur Blaney.

Mr. Weir, please, for seven minutes.

• (1715)

Mr. Erin Weir: I would indeed like to pick up on a question posed by my colleague. I might have missed the answer.

Will the recommendations of the independent advisory board for Senate appointments be made public?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: The recommendations of the advisory board will be made to the Prime Minister for his consideration, and the decision is the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Erin Weir: It would be up to the Prime Minister to make the recommendations public or not.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: That's my understanding.

Mr. Erin Weir: Okay. In terms of the cost of the advisory board, the figure you've provided and explained of \$5.4 million, that would be a contribution through the Privy Council Office. Will there be any other government departments, or perhaps the Senate itself, providing any funding in support of this body?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I can't speak for the Senate. It is my understanding that any costs that are incurred by other departments with respect to Senate appointments would be absorbed within their existing budgets, and the only expenses that I could foresee would be security clearances. I think that would be easily absorbed into the security agency's ongoing work in security clearances.

This is really a new function for the public service. Up until the government's announcement of this function, this was not done within the public service. We really had an administrative role around coordinating security clearances and making sure that the paperwork was transmitted. This is very much a new function. It will be housed out of PCO and I don't anticipate that other departments will come in with other requests.

Mr. Erin Weir: PCO is seeking just over \$700,000 for professional and special services, and I wonder if this is for consultants. Could you elaborate on what that money will pay for?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: I'm going to let Karen answer that question for you.

Ms. Karen Cahill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No, that's not just for consultants. That category has multiple items, such as training, hospitality, and of course, professional services, but not just to hire consultants.

Mr. Erin Weir: Is this specific \$700,000 mostly for training? Is it mostly for hospitality? Can you give us some sense?

Ms. Karen Cahill: You will understand, Mr. Chair, that what we have at this moment...we're still in the fiscal year. The fiscal year has not closed, so unfortunately, we will have to wait for the tabling of the public accounts to finalize this number and have a better understanding of the items that are involved.

Mr. Erin Weir: I have a question about the economic action plan. Now that this initiative is coming to an end, looking back, could you speak to what public service, if any, it served, and how the success of the program might be evaluated?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Thank you for the question. The economic action plan grew out of the global economic crisis in 2009, as you're probably aware.

Mr. Erin Weir: Sorry, just to clarify, I'm not asking about the whole economic action plan. I'm asking about the initiatives to advertise it.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes. The government was getting feedback that people didn't know where to go to get information. We were hearing that loud and clear. It was a profound glimpse of the obvious idea to put it all in one place. My understanding is that the site was accessed by a lot by people. The government saw that it was successful and looked for ways to leverage that success within the rubric of the communications policy of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Erin Weir: Thanks very much.

I have a question for the Public Service Commission about the hiring of veterans.

My colleague asked some very specific questions about the 94 veterans as a proportion of applicants or total public servants and I appreciate that those figures are coming, but I'd ask a more general question. It strikes me that's not a very large number of veterans in the context of the whole public service or in the context of the total number of veterans. Would you share that assessment and could you speak to it a bit?

• (1720)

Ms. Christine Donoghue: Thank you.

In the context of more specifics, we have been on-boarding veterans in the past, but not with the highest level of priority as we have done with the new legislation. We have had a lot of interest, so the activities are picking up and there is more knowledge that is being transferred across departments.

If I look at the activities we've had up to February 10, basically we have referred more than 876 veterans across 49 departments. As I said, many of them decide not to pursue the referral that is being made, for all kinds of reasons. Basically, out of those referrals we've had 11 appointments made to DND, one to ESDC, and one to Health Canada.

When it comes to referrals in the context of medical releases that are not attributable to service, 4,000 veterans have been referred to 60 departments, so there is a lot of activity that is picking up.

The question is whether veterans are seeing that there are opportunities that they want to embrace. It's not just a question of whether we want to hire; it's whether veterans are interested in the jobs that are being posted at this point. What's happening is that there's a lot more knowledge and awareness. We've been able to provide a lot more information on some of the successes we've had, on the skill sets we have from veterans and CAF members. I think that is going to grow.

It's important to keep in mind that some of these veterans have jobs, but they also have this entitlement with government for a five-year period. They may not necessarily look to do a move at this point in time in the context of the system. As they're making their way into the system....

It is a fairly complex system, when you don't really understand it. We as public servants have been part of it for a long time. That's why we're spending a lot of time providing information to veterans and teaching them how to make their way into the system. It is very different when going from CAF language to bureaucratic language. We're really trying to do some of the matching at this point, but we're confident that it will increase.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For our final seven-minute slot, we'll go to Monsieur Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here tonight—or almost tonight.

I have a quick question. I want to build on what my colleague Mr. Weir said with regard to the Senate appointments. For the Public Service Commission, is it normal practice to publish the names of all applicants who apply for a job? You don't make that public, do you?

Ms. Christine Donoghue: No. It is not public information.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay.

Maybe this is a question for PCO regarding the public appointments process. Do you publish the names of all the applicants who apply for a public appointment?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: No. We wouldn't do that for privacy considerations.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes, there are privacy concerns.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Is it safe to assume that for those who apply for Senate positions who don't make it, their names, obviously for privacy reasons, may not be published?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: We will apply the privacy rules of the Government of Canada. It's my understanding that their names would not be published, unless they gave—

Mr. Francis Drouin: —consent.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: —yes, unless they gave consent.

I'm not sure I can imagine a situation in which that would happen, but it might.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay. Thank you.

With the benefit of being last, everybody has asked the questions, but with regard to the \$1.6 million for the Prime Minister's digital presence, you mentioned an important term. You said that at the time, the previous prime minister wanted access to “live streaming” and that you didn't have live-streaming capabilities.

Is there somebody at PCO who is watching for up-and-coming technologies? I'm thinking that kids today are not on Facebook anymore.

Ms. Michelle Doucet: That's a really good question.

The number one watcher for new technologies and their impact on Canadians is Michael Wernick, who is the Clerk of the Privy Council.

Christine is laughing, because she gets it from him, too, I'm sure. He is probably one of the most tech-savvy leaders I have ever encountered. My colleagues at Shared Services Canada would likely support that. He is constantly pushing the boundaries and the limits of the envelope on what we can do. He is ambitious in terms of timelines because he understands the importance of staying relevant to Canadians in real time.

• (1725)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

As you know, there has been a bit of reorganization at PCO. There's a new deputy secretary to cabinet for results delivery. Was that taken from internal resources to do this new position or this new branch?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: Yes, currently we have reallocated within the Privy Council Office to support this new function.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I just didn't see it in the supplementary estimates.

With regard to the continued implementation of Canada's migrant smuggling prevention strategy, I see that in budget 2015, \$44.5 million over three years was budgeted. Is that just for PCO, or does it include other departments?

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

I can assure you it's not just for PCO. What I can do, if you like, is give you a breakdown of it.

Karen, jump in, if I miss a portion of it.

For instance, for the year 2014-15, \$14.9 million was spent, \$5 million of it at what is now the department of Global Affairs; another \$5 million by the RCMP; \$3 million at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; and \$700,000 by CSEC. PCO's portion of this piece is the smallest piece. By far the bulk of the overall amount is spent in the large line departments that actually have the front-line responsibility for contributing to the happy event of no migrant ship showing up with migrants on them in Canada.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Okay, thank you.

Concerning the \$0.8 million for the beyond the border action plan, as you know, it's been reported in the papers recently that the shared police project hit a bit of a bump. I'm wondering whether PCO factors in those risks, because if there are two partners involved, obviously there are some issues with the police force concerning where the jurisdiction is in which they would be charged, if there were an issue.

Do you factor all those risks in when you make an ask for budget?

Ms. Michelle Doucet: That's a really good question, and the short answer is yes.

You've talked about one initiative, and I'll give you another related initiative in terms of law enforcement agencies working together. That's the Regulatory Cooperation Council, which does not appear in these estimates, but has in previous estimates.

One thing they did as part of their work was a pilot project for enforcement on the Great Lakes between Canadian and American officials who patrol well-being and safety on the Great Lakes. The way they learned how to work together was to actually go out on 10 different missions to work through the kinks. That takes time and patience. We try to factor that into any spends that departments ask for, and certainly the spends that PCO asks for.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

The Chair: I think we'll call it quits there.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing today. I'm sure I speak on behalf of all of the committee members in saying that all of the information you provided has been very helpful. We look forward in the months and perhaps years to come to speaking with you again.

You're now excused.

Committee, there is one thing for your consideration, and it deals with what happens when we come back from our break week. March 22, as everyone knows, is budget day. That's also a day we normally sit, so I think we would be precluded from sitting on that day. It is also a short week, because the Friday is Good Friday.

You do not have to give an answer today, but I would ask you to think about—and we'll deal with it before we end this week—whether we sit on the Thursday. Because of the short week. I'm sure many members will be making travel plans to get out of Ottawa a little earlier—

Pardon me?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Are we under a Friday sitting schedule or not?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: No, it's Good Friday.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: But is the Thursday a Friday sitting schedule?

The Chair: No, my understanding is that it's a regular Thursday.

•(1730)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay.

The Chair: You can check with your House leader on that, but that's my understanding, and I haven't heard anything different.

Even if we do not meet that week, I would suggest that the Subcommittee on Agenda meet so that we can start planning our witnesses and the studies we may want to consider after that, because following the next week that we sit in Parliament there is a two-week break. Think about whether we meet as a full committee or just as a subcommittee, and we'll deal with that over the next two meetings.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: We'll take a [*Inaudible—Editor*] from the break.

The Chair: All right. We are adjourned.

Michelle-Doucet-Opening-Statement-E

Michelle-Doucet-Opening-Statement-E

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