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Chair

Mr. Tom Lukiwski

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC)): I welcome our witnesses and our guests.

Today, colleagues, we will be discussing supplementary estimates (B) and the departmental performance reports. We have a number of witnesses who will be giving testimony on both.

I think all of our guests know how committees operate. Certainly, this committee is no different. We'll hear your testimony. I understand we will have three presentations of approximately 10 minutes each. We'll then go into questions from all of our committee members.

I want to welcome as well a new committee member, Madame Sansoucy.

The Chair: Thank you for being here. I think it's your first time at our committee. It's good to have you with us.

Without any further ado, we will start.

I introduce Ms. Kathleen Fox for her opening statement, please.

Ms. Kathleen Fox (Chair, Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board): Mr. Chair, and honourable members, I want to thank you for inviting the Transportation Safety Board of Canada to appear today. I bring with me two colleagues who offer a wealth of experience. Mr. Jean Laporte is our chief operating officer. He has been with us since our inception in 1990. He possesses a deep understanding of our mandate and the processes we follow.

[Translation]

Luc Casault is our director general of corporate services. He is well placed to provide greater context and information about the financial and corporate details of our work.

[English]

For those members of the committee who may be unfamiliar with the Transportation Safety Board, I'd like to start with a very brief overview of who we are and what we do.

Our agency was created in 1990 by the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act. Our mandate and our sole purpose is to advance transportation safety in the air, marine, rail, and pipeline modes of transportation. We do that by conducting independent investigations, identifying safety deficiencies, causes,

and contributing factors, making recommendations, and reporting publicly on our investigations and their findings.

[Translation]

We do not attribute blame or civil or criminal liability.

[English]

Put simply, when something goes wrong, we investigate not only what happened but why it happened. Then we make public what we've learned so that those best placed to take action—meaning the regulators in the industry—can do so.

The main reason for our presence before this committee today is straightforward. We're asking for additional funds to cover a shortfall in our salary budget for the current fiscal year. Following the implementation of recent collective agreements for public servants, the TSB has had to absorb much of the costs for both current salary increases and retroactive salary payments. While we were diligent in setting aside funds over the last two years to cover those costs, the final agreed-upon salary increases were nonetheless higher than anticipated. The amount we are requesting is \$1.8 million. Broken down, that's approximately \$1.5 million for salaries and \$300,000 for statutory contributions to employee benefit plans.

Second, our departmental results report was recently tabled, and we'd be pleased to take this opportunity to discuss our results with the committee. Last year was a particularly busy one for the Transportation Safety Board. For instance, we published 44 investigation reports and issued a total of 20 recommendations in the marine, rail, and aviation sectors.

We hosted an inaugural transportation safety summit that brought together senior Canadian transportation executives from government and the transportation industry, along with some of their labour organizations.

We completed an in-depth safety study on expanding the use of locomotive voice and video recorders in Canada.

[Translation]

On top of that, we launched a new edition of our safety watchlist, which identifies the key safety issues that need to be addressed to make Canada's transportation system even safer.

[English]

Senior management, meanwhile, has undertaken a number of efforts to improve the way we go about our business. For example, we implemented a more structured and robust project management process aimed at improving investigation timeliness, along with enhanced measures for tracking the progress of investigations. We're also placing a greater emphasis on teamwork, and the scoping and assignment of investigation tasks is now done in a manner that better leverages all personnel across the country.

• (1105)

[Translation]

We also continued to increase the amount of information that we proactively publish on our website.

[English]

While the TSB is a small organization, which can somewhat limit our flexibility, we have a strong track record when it comes to adapting to change and getting things done, so we thank you for asking us to be here today and we'll be pleased to take your questions in due course.

Thank you.

The Chair: I thank you, Madam Fox, for the economy of your words.

We now have Madam Ramcharan. You have 10 minutes please.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services, Privy Council Office): Okay, thank you.

Good morning, Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting the Privy Council Office to review our 2017-18 supplementary estimates (B).

[Translation]

As you know, the mandate of the Privy Council Office is to provide professional, non-partisan advice and support to the Prime Minister and ministers within his portfolio, and to support the effective operation of cabinet.

As a central agency, PCO exerts a leadership role across government departments and agencies to ensure the coherence and coordination of policy development and delivery.

[English]

We sought \$144.9 million via the main estimates 2017-18, which represents an increase of \$24.2 million from the amount sought in our 2016-17 main estimates, which was \$120.7 million. This increase was mainly due to additional funding to enhance our capacity to support the Prime Minister and the government in the delivery of their agenda as announced in budget 2016. Much of this increased funding was used as follows:

We have provided advice to the Prime Minister, as Minister of Youth, on engaging young Canadians in consultations on government initiatives, on establishing the Prime Minister's Youth Council, and we have supported two meetings between the Prime Minister and council members in 2016-17.

We have managed the open, transparent, and merit-based selection process for Government of Canada appointments which resulted in the processing of almost 12,000 applications and 123 appointments in 2016-17.

A website was developed and implemented to allow Canadians to apply directly for vacant Senate positions. More than 2,700 applications were received, which resulted in 20 appointments.

[Translation]

We have successfully played a policy challenge function to departments and provided high quality logistical support to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the cabinet committees' system; we supported the work of 166 cabinet and cabinet committee meetings, and almost 597 cabinet documents were issued.

[English]

The clerk was supported in his efforts to advance key renewal issues like mental health, diversity and inclusion, and discussion groups were created to seek feedback.

A number of information management and information technology projects, such as the modernization of PCO's internal email, upgrading to new mobile device services, and improvements to security and IT infrastructure were implemented.

[Translation]

We have enhanced engagement with provinces and territories, as well as municipalities and indigenous groups, serving the Prime Minister as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

[English]

We have increased our policy capacity to support the democratic institutions reform agenda and we have led the national dialogue on the future of Canada's democracy.

In addition to the \$144.9 million received via estimates 2017-18, PCO also sought \$34.4 million in supplementary estimates (A) for the operations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and PCO was given access to the 2016-17 carry-forward of \$5.3 million to bring our overall total authorities to \$184.6 million.

Today we are seeking an additional \$34.3 million in 2017-18 supplementary estimates (B), bringing PCO's total 2017-18 authorities to \$218.9 million. These additional resources will be used to pursue the information management and information technology project we started in 2016-17, which consists of replacement and upgrade of current IT infrastructure, the modernization of PCO systems, the introduction of new information sharing, business intelligence and reporting solutions, and transitioning to a top-secret network.

It will also lead the establishment of the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, NSICOP, and its secretariat. PCO will receive funds to cover costs for NSI accommodation, security, information technology and salary costs until NSICOP receives its own appropriation in December 2017.

We will fund a study to assess the current state of innovation in the public sector and propose areas for action to reinforce capacity to innovate and thereby deliver better outcomes for citizens and the government.

This comprises the major needs and initiatives to be funded through PCO's proposed supplementary estimates (B).

Mr. Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this context. I'd be pleased to answer any of your questions.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Borbey.

[Translation]

Mr. Patrick Borbey (President, Public Service Commission): Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I am pleased to be here today along with Philip Morton, our vice-president of corporate affairs, to discuss the Public Service Commission of Canada's supplementary estimates (B) and our 2016-17 Departmental Results Report.

[English]

The Public Service Commission promotes and safeguards merit-based appointments, and in collaboration with other stakeholders protects the non-partisan nature of the public service. The PSC reports directly to Parliament on its mandate. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as designated minister, tables our annual report and other reports in Parliament on our behalf.

[Translation]

Our supplementary estimates (B) are fairly straightforward. They provide for the transfer of \$252,000 from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The CFIA is a separate agency named in Schedule V of the Financial Administration Act, which uses the Public Service Resourcing System—the system behind the government's primary job portal.

[English]

As such, the agency is not subject to permanent transfers like other organizations. Its financial contributions to support the PSRS have traditionally been provided via the supplementary estimates process. We are working to have this amount included in annual reference levels for future years.

[Translation]

With regards to the Departmental Results Report, it is an exciting time to be leading the Public Service Commission. Our 2016-17 report outlines many of the PSC's accomplishments. I will not go into them in great detail, but I want to confirm that we recognize that no two departments are alike and have provided organizations with the room to staff positions in response to their unique needs.

[English]

We are placing a greater emphasis on designing our programs and services based on the needs of end-users—hiring managers and job candidates. We are working with our partners to explore new and truly innovative ways to attract, recruit, and assess qualified candidates from coast to coast to coast.

One case I will bring to your attention is the redesign of our student application process carried out last year. It saw the length of time to complete an application for employment reduced from an average of 60 minutes to six minutes and from 10 pages of content to four pages. It is the type of innovation that I want to see incorporated into all other aspects of our recruitment and assessment work at the Public Service Commission.

I have been encouraging PSC staff to be bold, take intelligent risks, and not be afraid of failure. I firmly believe that these elements are key to innovation and allow us to try new things and challenge the status quo.

[Translation]

As we approach the 110th anniversary of the creation of the PSC, I want to assure Parliament and Canadians that the changes we make will not compromise our role in safeguarding Canada's merit-based and non-partisan public service, which is so well regarded across the world.

We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

[English]

Meegwetch. Qujannamiik.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, before we get into questions, I remind you that I'm going to try to save about 15 minutes at the end of this meeting to go into committee business for some brief items we have to discuss. That will be about an hour and a half from now.

Mr. Whalen, you're up for seven minutes.

• (1115)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, all, for coming today. We greatly appreciate the work the independent civil service does, and we look forward to this opportunity today to grill you guys a little bit. It's with the utmost respect. We just want to make sure that public funds are spent well. As Mr. McCauley likes to point out, this is probably our most important duty here on the Hill.

I'm going to focus primarily on you, Ms. Ramcharan, with respect to the work that's being done with the youth council. I have a youth council at my office. We spend a modest amount of money to get children and young adults together to help inform our views on policies. We find it very productive.

Are there any particular deliverables that are meant to come out of these meetings from the PMO and your support of the PMO? Are there any public reports that are prepared as a result of it? Are the results of the advice made public to people? How do Canadians know that this money is being spent wisely?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

In terms of how we've been supporting the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister, as you know, signalled his commitment to Canada's young people by assuming the role of Minister of Youth. We have within PCO a youth secretariat that supports the Prime Minister in his capacity by providing the strategic leadership, the policy advice, and the coordination on youth commitments. As well as supporting him in terms of his role on the youth council, we connect youth with engagement opportunities in other key policy areas, and we provide strategic advice on a youth service initiative.

They've had a number of meetings over the past year in Calgary, Montreal, and St. John's, and various conference calls with leaders and government officials to discuss their perspectives on issues that matter most to young people, such as youth employment, mental health, poverty reduction, reconciliation, the environment, climate change, clean growth, and youth service. They've also had an opportunity to create opportunities for youth across Canada who have expressed an interest in engaging with the Government of Canada, to do different kinds of engagement opportunities on a wide range of issues.

Mr. Nick Whalen: That's very interesting. I think we have the sense that the work is well worthwhile.

In terms of appointments, this is a new appointment process before this committee. We've heard of a number of instances where change management hasn't gone particularly well within the civil service.

What type of metric is the department using to make sure the appointment process is functional and that decisions are made increasingly better and increasingly more efficiently? Are there timelines by which you gauge the success of the appointment process? Perhaps you could let us know about measures of success on the appointments file.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: The appointments file has been very successful over the past year. We have done a number of different transactions. Almost 400 appointments were made after following an open and transparent merit-based selection process; approximately 290 short-term transitional appointments to ensure the continuity of service to Canadians; and approximately 740 appointments made through other selection processes. We have done a lot of work over the past year.

As you're aware, the government is really committed to having more diverse appointments. To that, we have been able to make sure that of all those appointments, nearly 60% were women; over 10% were visible minorities; 10% were indigenous Canadians; and persons with disabilities were well represented. In addition, based on that total representation, we have seen that the GIC appointments have increased by 5%, so that now, overall, 40% are women. There have been a number of successes in that area, and they continue that over this current year.

Mr. Nick Whalen: I guess that's success demonstrated.

An interesting article appeared this week in the national media. It may have been CTV News or the CBC; I'm not sure. It was about the SS7 attacks on Canadian telecommunications. In particular, Monsieur Dubé of the New Democratic Party was a test case for his use of cellphone technology. The ease with which hackers can track the locations and the communications, and even record the locations and calls that people are making using cellphone technology in Canada very simply was quite concerning.

With respect to the security in IT infrastructure that's been implemented for the PMO and the PCO, do we have a higher degree of confidence that those devices are protected against SS7 attacks? Is there a higher degree of certainty or are you relying on the same network security that all Canadians are using, which has been shown to be completely deficient in the news reports this week?

• (1120)

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: It might be a question more appropriate for my colleagues at Shared Services Canada, but maybe I can talk to you about what we're doing at PCO, from a cybersecurity perspective, in terms of understanding the current environment we're in and the steps we're taking.

Specifically to your question with regard to cellphones, we all recognize that when using cellphones, it is open for people to listen to conversations, to access them. What we've done with some of the resources we received in our first Treasury Board submission for IM and IT was really take a look at our mobile travel devices, for instance, when our senior officials are travelling to other countries. We have looked at providing a mobile travel device that would allow them to continue to maintain their own email address but that would really scale down the access they have in terms of going forward. If their phone is hacked, per se, the hackers have the opportunity to really get very limited information and not any secure information. We were able to do that with the initial funds that we had from—

Mr. Nick Whalen: I'm sure there are going to be more questions about this the week following this news report.

My final question is really in respect of your proposed study on the current state of innovation. Some new appropriation money is going there. It seems that adoption, creation, and implementation of technology across government is something that all parts of government are studying, and so I really have two questions.

Is this study that's being proposed under PCO being coordinated with other departments that are also engaged in similar studies? We've heard from TSB that they're looking at agile approaches to change management. Also, there's a whole life-cycle understanding of innovation. There's the creation. First, there's the primary research that comes up with new ideas. There's development of products from that new research. There's prototyping of those new products to make sure they work. Then there's the adoption of those technologies within a particular enterprise. Are you focusing on only step four, or are you looking at innovation in all those four areas of the innovation life cycle?

The Chair: We're going to have to get you to refrain from answering, since we are over time. However, if subsequent questions don't come back to the same material, we would invite you to provide written responses to the chair following your presentation here.

We'll now go to Mr. McCauley for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): If you can answer Mr. Whalen's question in about 30 seconds, you can go ahead.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Within PCO, we have an innovation hub, an impact and innovation hub. They have the role, right across Canada, to think about different processes, behavioural aspects, of looking at how we do innovation. This study was really to help us get a bit more insight into the leading-edge study that's going on and what we could do further. It really supports a deputy minister task team on innovation. That really does cover the whole gambit across government.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

Ms. Fox, most of your estimates request is just for salary increases. Is that correct?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: That's correct.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: My understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that the TSB, through the act, allows you to do investigations involving Canadian airlines operating outside of Canada.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: That is correct. To clarify, if it's in another country, for example in the U.S. or a country that has.... They would conduct the investigation. We would provide an accredited representative to them.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That was another part of my question, but thank you.

Regarding the July Air Canada incident where the plane almost landed on several other planes, a runway incident, there's a gentleman named Jim Hall who is the former chairman of the American NTSB, their transportation safety board. He said it could have been the most significant near miss we've had in a decade and probably came close to the greatest aviation disaster in history. We could have had over 1,000 passengers at risk. Are we assisting in that investigation? The reason I ask that is I noticed on the web page that runway incursions are highlighted as a continuing risk and have been for several years. It's highlighted in the 2016 report. Are we helping with that investigation?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: With respect to the occurrence in the United States, it is the National Transportation Safety Board that will conduct the investigation but, yes, we are participating. Under the International Civil Aviation Organization, countries can provide an accredited representative, and so we have an accredited representative on that investigation.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: The reason I'm asking this is it sounds like all the money you're looking for is just for back pay. Do you have enough resources to assist? I'm looking at the web page here, and there are 52 recommendations directed at Transport Canada from the TSB watch-list that have been active for 10 years and sometimes 20 years that haven't been addressed.

I'm worried if you have enough resources to follow up on these items and, if you have a response, maybe why Transport Canada is not following up on these very serious issues.

• (1125)

Ms. Kathleen Fox: If I may, there are two parts to your question.

The first part is, we have a base operating budget. We're a small agency, and we have a base operating budget of which about 80% is salaries. We have taken a number of reductions over the years, and we've taken steps to be as efficient as we can, but the fact is that the recent collective agreement increases are higher than anticipated, and we're responsible for covering those increases this year and ongoing, as well as the retroactive impact.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Can I assume we should say that, for Canadians' safety, you need more resources, without putting words in your mouth?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: The funds that we're requesting today are to cover off the basic salaries of the FTEs we have in place.

With respect to following up on recommendations of Transport or recommendations we make to other industry or regulators, we have the resources to follow up on that. The issue for the TSB is that Transport Canada has been slow in responding to our recommendations that we've issued over a period of years, particularly on the aviation side. We are working with Transport Canada to look at all of those outstanding recommendations, to get updates on them, and hopefully to close some of those off in the future.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What is TSB doing to help rectify this situation or change the situation with Transport Canada? You say you're working with them, but as someone who flies every week, I'm quite concerned.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We started by highlighting this issue publicly, by adding the slow progress in addressing TSB recommendations to our 2016 watch-list. We are focusing the attention of the department, the public, and the media on the fact that these steps need to be taken.

The TSB does not have the power to enforce our recommendations. We can make, and we do make, a compelling argument for change, but after that, it's up to the regulator and the industry to take steps.

One, we have made this a public issue on our watch-list. Two, we have taken more proactive steps to work with the regulator and to work with industry to make sure that they can take steps to address these outstanding issues.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Great.

The areas you have on your watch-list are unstable approaches, runway overruns, and then risk of collisions on our runways. I think there were four last year for the risk of collision on runways just in Canada. Of those three, what's the most important we need to get Transport Canada...? They're all important, obviously, but what is your biggest concern of those three?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: They're all important. We can't say that one is more important than the other and they're often linked.

Unstable approaches can lead to an approach and landing accident. An unstable approach can contribute to a runway overrun and a runway incursion is a risk of collision on the runway. Therefore, they're all important and we're pursuing activities in all of those areas.

As well, we have multimodal issues relating to safety management regulatory oversight, as well as the slow progress in addressing our recommendations.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have a little less than a minute.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Great. I'll just go to PCO.

On the \$32 million for information modernization, you have listed "other organizational changes". What other organizational changes are there? Can you break them down for me, please?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Sure. Within the \$32 million, we have the big bucket that is roughly around \$29 million for IM- and IT-specific projects. We have another \$1 million that helps support our e-cabinet initiative. There is another portion to help with purchase of equipment for our business continuity plan, so technology, like putting in fibre optics. The last piece is to help support our transition to the top secret network.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is the money in the estimates a one-time thing that will address those or will we see more in the next estimates? Would we then see an ongoing cost every year for more and more money or will this get us caught up?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: No. What we're going to see—

The Chair: A one-word answer would be perfect.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: No.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Ms. Fox, thanks for your information, by the way.

Thanks.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Sansoucy, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses.

I won't have any questions for the TBS representatives because I think it goes without saying that the existing collective agreements must be applied.

My initial questions will be for the Privy Council Office.

I will make a comment first, and it will lead to my questions. I'm a new MP. For two years, my great surprise has been seeing how much the Canadians we represent listen to and follow the public broadcast of committees. I always keep in mind the importance of understanding the information I'm given, since I have to represent the average citizen.

If I've understood your presentation, transparency and openness have cost \$24.2 million. What I don't understand is that you justify the \$34.3 million by saying that this money is used to update the existing information technology infrastructure and to assess the current state of innovation. Those are fine words, but they don't mean much to me. I can't put an image to words like that. It's all fine, but it doesn't reflect anything.

My first question is about the fact that the PCO provides financial and administrative support to commissions of inquiry. You supported the introduction of a computer system that was designed to analyze hundreds of thousands—that's no small amount—of videos, transcripts, electronic documents, paper documents and briefs. The findings are that this is a complex system and that the employees who will have to work on it will have to be properly trained. What support did the PCO give commissions of inquiry to ensure that employees were properly trained?

We are in the communication age, and there is a lot of information to deal with. How do you make sure this system is set up properly?

You told us that you were processing a lot of information. I would like to better understand how you are upgrading. It isn't clear to me. How do you get everyone to understand? Do you use employee training or support for commissions of inquiry, for instance?

That's a lot of jargon, and many people must have difficulty in understanding it. How do you ensure employees are properly trained to implement this system?

• (1130)

[English]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Mr. Chair, can I just get a point of clarification?

When talking about the investigation, are you talking about the commission of inquiry?

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Yes, indeed.

[English]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Okay, in the Privy Council Office we provide administrative support to the commission of inquiry. When I talk about that—and I understand your point—what I'm referring to are our financial processes, the actual payment of bills. When we talk about the information technology, it's about the computers that we provide, access to email services, shared drives, those types of things.

Human resources support is the actual creating of the letters of offer, making sure they have the right security clearance in order to be hired. It's all of that support that the PCO does. Only a small portion of the \$34 million that we're talking about relates to the operations for the Privy Council, roughly \$1 million. The rest that's there is to support the commission in terms of achieving its mandate. It determines what its work plan is and how it's going to go about doing it. We help facilitate that through financial payment of bills, contracting, the processing of getting its staff on board. That's what we do within the PCO.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: You said you asked for \$34.4 million for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, but we know that this commission faces major challenges.

The interim report indicates that the deadline for recruiting staff is four months. As you just said, you have to go through the Privy Council Office process for the security screening.

As a result, once the decision to hire someone is made, it takes an average of five weeks for the security process to be completed and for the person to begin work. I think these delays are unreasonable, and that affects the work.

Will steps be taken to ensure a more efficient process, and to more quickly recruit and hire staff?

[English]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Mr. Chair, in terms of human resources, it doesn't take five weeks. The commission has a lot of latitude with regard to determining how to best bring people in. It has the opportunity to do a process internally. It can go out and seek people who can come and help. It's up to it to determine what the right processes are. It doesn't follow the same processes that we do within the public service to go out and hire. It doesn't have to think about merit and all of the rules that we have to follow in seeking staff. It's up to it to determine how it best goes about finding its employees.

Once it has determined its employees, that's when some of the rules we use kick in. We have to make sure the position that it's hiring them for is in line because we use our rates of remuneration. If

someone is admin support in federal government and someone is admin support within the commission, we want to make sure there are comparabilities. What we seek is job descriptions, work descriptions that we can look at to ensure that, if individuals are coming in to do certain jobs, they're going to get paid at a level consistent with the public service. We do have a little bit of process. The ability to do a classification of a position is usually about 24 to 48 hours. It's not very long because the positions in the commission are not very complex, as you can find in the federal public service.

Once the commission has chosen the person, once we have a classified job, we have to do our due diligence on security clearances. We've put in place an expedited process to help support the commission. The commission can decide whether it's a reliability clearance, a secret clearance, what type of clearance is needed, and depending on the type of clearance—

• (1135)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: If it isn't five weeks, how long is it?

[English]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Right now, it takes about three weeks to do security clearance.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Okay.

On another note—

[English]

The Chair: I'm afraid—

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: I'll continue shortly.

[English]

The Chair: You can continue next time.

Ms. Shanahan, you have seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome my colleague Ms. Sansoucy to the committee.

I am on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We have just received the tabling of the Auditor General's reports. Here we have the chance to talk about the issues.

I want to make a small reference to the report we saw this week. The Auditor General has commented that we still tend not to think of the citizen, and my colleague made reference to this. Not only are people interested in what's going on here, but ultimately they are receiving the services. They are why we are here.

One of the tools I find very interesting in providing better programs and services to Canadians is the gender-based analysis plus.

I would like to start with questions for the Privy Council Office.
[English]

Could you please talk to us about the challenge function and how that works with producing better policies, programs, and services for citizens?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Mr. Chair, one of the important roles that we play in PCO is that challenge function and if you think about all the central agencies that would exist in government like the Public Service Commission, the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board Secretariat, PSPC, the Department of Public Works and Government Services, the role that PCO plays is really fundamentally in the role of policy, legislation, and administrative processes.

Every time a department is looking to move into a new policy area, a new administrative area, a legislation area, we have PCO specialists, PCO analysts, who look at each and every one of those requests and do the challenge function with the department associated with it.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Forgive me for interrupting, but do you feel that there's...because there's doing a thing, bringing it into the development process and there's making it a priority. Has there been a change there that we can anticipate will make it? The Auditor General was very adamant that we're not there yet in providing client-centred, citizen-centred service delivery.

Can you talk a little bit about that? Is there something that's changed in how you do that challenge function? Do you get people a little riled up there?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: In terms of how we do it, we really focus on what's coming forward on the mandate commitments that the government has identified. What PCO really does is support the Prime Minister and the functioning of the cabinet. It's looking at how we structure our agenda to make sure that the priorities of governments move through the system the way they're intended to, working with our various departments.

In terms of the client-centred focus, again, I mentioned the innovation hub. One of the things that their function is is to think about how we sort of change our behaviours to look more at how clients want to get served, what they want to do, and how we can help facilitate that. That's what we're seeing.

The other thing in terms of our challenge function and what budget 2016 provided us with resources for was our results in delivery unit. That really starts to focus again on the results we are trying to achieve, if we are in the process of achieving them, and really keeping track of that. I think those are some of the big fundamental switches that we've had within the PCO in terms of moving forward, in terms of making sure that we actually achieve the priorities that we set out to do.

• (1140)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you for that, and we look forward to hearing more about it.

Now switch to who is going to actually do this. Public service renewal is under way.

Mr. Borbey, can you talk to us about some of the.... Congratulations, by the way, on cutting down that application time. I certainly heard that from students who I dealt with, and I do have a McGill student.... I think we might have a few McGill students shadowing us today. They have an added interest in how we're going about hiring and developing the public servants of today and tomorrow.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: That's a pretty wide question in terms of our mandate.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Okay, go for it.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Obviously, recruitment is our daily bread. We think and dream and sleep recruitment. We're always constantly looking at ways that we can do a better job in terms of reaching Canadians, reaching the talent where it is, wherever it may be in the country, and ensuring that, within the public service itself, managers are as open as possible to finding talent across the country, including in some cases sometimes, not very far, just looking at people like veterans who are available on the priority list. We've made some progress over the last little while. Now we've placed about 477 veterans with the new entitlement, but again, sometimes the answers to the recruitment needs are very close by and very evident and are people who have already served this country.

Other answers involve tapping into pools that we've not necessarily tapped into before and, of course, students and graduates and young people who have a lot to contribute have to be a priority. Our systems are too focused on internal replacement. Managers are constantly chasing after.... When Sally is retiring, we're looking for the best person within the unit to replace Sally instead of maybe thinking about whether to restructure the unit and look to the post-secondary recruitment pool that we've established and bring some people in. Then invest in nurturing, mentoring, supporting, learning and development basically to build the public service of the future.

If we don't change our approach, we're going to find ourselves in a crisis in a few years because we know that retirements are happening. They're happening now. They're going to be coming. We haven't sufficiently recruited from outside to be able deal with that replacement. We have a fantastic public service that's supported by men and women from across the country. As they leave, we need to make sure that we have the replacements. That's why student programs, revamping our post-secondary recruitment, making it a lot more attractive, sometimes jazzing up our advertisements so that we don't look as bureaucratic as we may be; those are things that we want to do.

On diversity, again, the more we open to the outside, we find that automatically we get more diverse applicants. The people are out there. The pools are out there. We just have to open the doors.

I could go on.

The Chair: I sense that but we'll have to cut it off there.

Mr. McCauley, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks.

Ms. Fox, thanks for your information.

I just want to get back to the second incident with Air Canada recently. I think it was in San Francisco that they were waved off six times but they still went ahead and landed.

Is your organization part of any investigation into that? Could you tell me again about the near-collision investigation? It doesn't show that on your website as being TSB that is doing an investigation on that.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: Just to be clear, there were two occurrences involving Air Canada in San Francisco. For the first one, which was the approach over the...the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board is the agency conducting the investigation. It's not an ongoing TSB investigation; however, we do assist in the investigation.

• (1145)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's why I'm asking about the assistance, because you don't have a post on your website saying that you're assisting or anything. Is that because you're just assisting?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: That's correct.

We often assist on foreign investigations involving Canadian-registered aircraft and Canadian-manufactured aircraft.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Will the results be on the website when the U.S. have finished theirs?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board will publish their report when they're finished, and it will be available on the NTSB website.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: But it won't be on yours?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We don't normally publish their reports on our website, no.

With respect to the second event, we are not investigating it. Perhaps I spoke too quickly earlier on—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Are you assisting?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We don't investigate accidents in other countries unless we're requested to do so by that state. We can assist through the ICAO accredited representative program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: The act does allow you to investigate though, does it not?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: If we are requested to do so or if we believe that there's a substantial Canadian interest in doing so. For example, we did an investigation in open waters off Brazil when a sail-training vessel capsized and there were 40 Canadian students on board—that kind of thing.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I don't mean to be critical, but there's a substantial Canadian interest in those two Air Canada ones, which had a fair number of Canadians on them. Why would we not participate as we're allowed to under the act? I'm not being critical. I'm just curious why that is. Is it a lack of resources, or do we not have the trained staff to do it?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: I'll get Mr. Laporte to clarify.

Mr. Jean Laporte (Chief Operating Officer, Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board): We do have the capacity, and we are actively engaged. However, we have to respect international protocols and conventions.

In a country like the U.S., there is a robust investigation capacity in which we have confidence, and we work with them all the time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay, that's fair enough.

That answers my question, thanks.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: If I may just add to that, if there's a U.S. carrier that has an accident in Canada, we would normally lead the investigation, and then they would assist.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's fair enough.

Mr. Laporte answered that you have confidence in their ability. That's fine.

If something like that were to happen here, do we have trained investigative staff, trained on those types of planes, who would qualify to do such an investigation?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: Absolutely.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Good.

I just want to get back to your website with your watch-list.

Despite what happened in Lac-Mégantic a couple of years ago, you still have it listed on your watch-list as transportation of flammable liquids by rail. We've had some changes with double-hulled tankers and Bill C-49. Why specifically is it still on the watch-list? What's Transport Canada not doing that we should be doing to get this issue off the watch-list?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: With respect to the transportation of flammable liquids, the TSB made five recommendations as a result of the Lac-Mégantic investigation. Only one of those has been addressed in a fully satisfactory fashion, and that's with respect to emergency response assistance plans. There are still four outstanding recommendations that are—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What are they? Do you know off the top of your head?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: Yes.

With respect to improved tank-car standards, they have introduced some new standards, but there is a phased-in process over a period of years. There are still, what we call CPC-1232 tank cars that are carrying crude oil, as an example. It is going to take time before the new tank-car standards are fully phased in.

Second, with respect to Transport Canada oversight, we have a recommendation on that. Transport Canada has taken steps, and they are progressing, but we want to see that they are effective. We also have other recommendations with respect to prevention of runaways, as an example.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Not to be alarmist—and this is not a partisan issue because it's a safety issue, and it was an issue under our government and also under the current government—but it sounds like Transport Canada has a long way to go, or a lot of issues to address with safety, both in rail and in air.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: With respect to rail, there's no doubt that a lot of actions have been taken since Lac-Mégantic, but there's still more to be done. That's why we continue to track our recommendations until they're fully implemented.

With respect to aviation, the overall safety performance in this country has been very good. The accident rate has been decreasing over the last 10 years, but there are a number of outstanding risks for which we believe more action can be taken—those are illustrated on our watch-list—and with respect to the issue of the length of time it's taking to implement those recommendations.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's quite concerning.

Thank you very much for the information. It's very useful.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you have five minutes.

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank the witnesses for being here this morning. I really appreciate it.

My first question is for PCO and it's with regard to the secret network being built. Mr. McCauley asked whether there will be extra costs moving forward on this. You can probably understand why we're asking these questions, and obviously, IT has not had a good name over the past few years with email transformation. I don't need to explain that as I know you're well aware of this.

How is PCO managing that secret network transition? Are you working in collaboration with Shared Services?

•(1150)

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: We work in collaboration with the Communications Security Establishment. They are going to be hosting the top secret network for a number of departments. In the past, our top secret network was built and designed and housed within PCO, so it wasn't transferred to Shared Services Canada. Shared Services Canada has a mandate to provide up to secret, while the Communications Security Establishment has a responsibility for providing top secret. Last year, we were transitioning our cabling and all of our infrastructure so it could be taken on board, stood up, by the Communications Security Establishment, and this year and ongoing we have the ongoing costs. The number of licences we need, the number of work stations we need, all that drives the costs associated with this.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I want to go back to what Ms. Shanahan said on why we're doing this and what this will allow your department to do. I know on the cabinet side they might be able to get rid of their cabinet documents and finally have a secure network. I'm speaking of greening government and whatnot. Are these some of the objectives you're trying to reach as well?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Yes, exactly. There are two things and they're both about hardening the security posture for PCO. The top secret network will provide us with a stable, secure system. When you have systems in different departments that you're responsible for, sometimes you can't have a common, enterprise-wide approach in addressing your security needs, your patching needs, in order to understand what your most immediate threats are. The fact that the Communications Security Establishment is doing this on our behalf means that we can rely on their expertise to help support that.

On the e-cabinet side, this is a project we're doing in conjunction with Shared Services Canada. It allows us to have the opportunity to make improvements constantly and consistently, to make sure the information we're protecting is secured on a regular basis so that they can do that across the system and use their infrastructure across the system for departments to access those secret documents.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

Mr. Borbey, welcome back to our committee. I hope you've been settling well into your new role. The last time, I think, the questions I went into were about how the Public Service Commission can drive hiring of young people and get youth involved. According to the last statistics I've seen, the average age was 37 years old, which is alarming. It will create a big corporate memory gap in the bureaucracy, which is something that nobody wants.

You were speaking with Ms. Shanahan about some of the ideas, but I'm curious to find out more. You mentioned opening up to the broader base to ensure that we can hire people.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Clearly, encouraging managers across the public service to open their processes to all Canadians rather than leaving them closed to the public service would automatically allow more diverse candidates and young people to apply. I think it's part of our role to socialize that type of message when we're working with managers. We want to show them that there are options, that there are effective and efficient ways of creating pools they can draw on instead of looking at the staffing of a position on a unique basis. Sometimes people complain about how long it takes to staff. Well, if you're trying to staff one job, it might take a long time, but if you're accessing a pool, it can take much less time before you have somebody in place.

Revamping our student programs was an important initiative. I've been looking at statistics, and about 20% of our indeterminate hires are former students, and this is something I want to look at. Can we actually do better than that? I think we should be getting more of these students. If they spend time with us and they have a good experience, can we follow through? For example, managers have the authority to give a conditional letter of offer to a student who is returning to school. Upon successful graduation and meeting security and other requirements, that person could actually be hired back into the public service on an ongoing basis. If, at the end of the day, it was a good hire for a summer job or a co-op term, maybe it's a good hire for the longer term as well. There are ways of facilitating the work of managers that will have a positive impact on students.

• (1155)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Shipley, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to follow up on what Mr. Drouin said in terms of access. You're in the business of hiring, obviously, everybody except for the Transportation Safety Board, it seems. You had mentioned opening it up to all Canadians. It surprises me that it actually isn't available now and that you wouldn't have access to a pool. Are you talking about actually helping to develop a pool so that you would have that pool in place earlier?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Yes, we already develop pools. We develop specific pools, working with individual departments or collective departments. For example, if they're looking at bringing in scientific staff, maybe a number of science-based departments could work together. We do that already.

We also have our pool from the post-secondary recruitment program that's established on an annual basis. Some 50,000 people applied last year to this program. We end up with about 6,000 or 7,000 who are deemed to be partially assessed or partially qualified. The managers can draw from that pool depending on the specific needs.

We're trying to be more strategic and have specific career streams identified within that pool so that it's much more precise. We're also looking at being more targeted when we're doing outreach in universities and colleges. For example, right now there's a lot of hiring going on in science-based jobs at the Department of Fisheries

and Oceans and at Environment and Climate Change Canada. They have some very specific needs. We work with them, and we go to universities like the University of Victoria with their particular needs in mind.

The other thing is that we've done a lot of outreach to universities that have strong indigenous populations because, again, one of our targets is to try to increase the representation of indigenous people in the government. A more targeted approach can also yield better results.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Where do you go, for example... I think actually, to most Canadians, the numbers of applicants and people you need to deal with would likely be pretty astounding. When you talk about thousands of people in specific streams that you're trying to meet, to most businesses in a riding like mine, which is made up of small and medium-size businesses, it sounds complex. I'm just saying that as some background to folks who may be reading this, who are sort of the ordinary, everyday business people out there trying to grasp the complexity of the situation.

I totally agree. I think when you have an opportunity through our education system, universities and colleges, to work with students and you get the ones you want, who have merit—although not all of them will meet that standard—and have the opportunity not to miss that through not being able to offer them some sort of a conditional opportunity for employment, is that something that...? What do you have to do to start to put that in place or is it already in place?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: There are a lot more flexibilities already available to managers than they sometimes acknowledge. Our job is to make sure they know what's available to them, what the options are, and that they can choose to have approaches that are much more targeted and that can lead to results much more quickly.

However, our systems are antiquated. We know that. When you're talking about how you sift through thousands of applications and come down to the right people for the right job, that's where we're looking at prototyping right now. We're consulting with both candidates and hiring managers to prototype a new system that would be much more intuitive. We're thinking of something like Amazon: one click, buy. Well, it would be one click, apply. Perhaps the people wouldn't have to apply every time a new job comes up, but their application would be held in the system and they could actually get referrals automatically from our system, saying something like this: "You applied for this job. You're not quite qualified. However, these three jobs have been posted by the following departments. Are you interested? With one click, you can apply."

That's the vision we're developing. It's going to take us a bit of time. We're going to have some system development issues related to that, but this technology does exist for us to be much more effective. We could take those thousands and we could sift them down to the top candidates who we need, wherever they may be in the country.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Again, I will impose my steel-like will as a committee chair.

I'm fascinated with what you said about that technology being available and the opportunities that may derive from that. I know it's in the developmental stage right now, if I understand you correctly, but if you have more information you can provide to the committee, I think that would be extremely helpful for two reasons. Number one, if you can get a seamless transition to getting people who had put in an application six months ago automatically getting bumped into another opportunity, great. Also, it would be fascinating to see exactly how you plan to do that in a seamless manner. We've seen other IT programs and payroll programs in the federal government that haven't been quite as successful as you seem to suggest it could be.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Obviously, we are very conscious of lessons learned associated with other systems development. The approach we've taken to develop prototypes is a way for us to ensure that before we go to the market and start procuring this solution, we will have tested it through prototypes. This will allow us to focus the scope of the system project and to a certain extent redo some of the risks associated with that. That's the approach we've taken.

I think we may have a little presentation we could send your way that will describe a little bit what we're doing.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That would be helpful.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: It's a work in progress still.

The Chair: I'm encouraged to hear your words.

Mr. Whalen, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Ms. Ramcharan, for responding to my earlier question through Mr. McCauley, when he was here.

I'm trying to drill down a bit into the estimates on this, because it says here to "Fund a study". Okay, I get that. When I look at the appropriations we're voting on, it says that it's to support the Privy Council Office's information technology modernization, just under \$32 million, and to establish the secretariat for national security intelligence, \$2.2 million. Then there's actually a negative, so it's a transfer to GAC in order for them to help the OECD do their innovation study.

Is this study you're talking about different? Does it fall under part of the \$32 million I mentioned at the beginning? Who are the different deputy ministers, and which departments are involved in this pan-governmental approach to innovation development and implementation you're talking about?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: The reduction is for us to move the money to GAC so they can take our money and contract with the OECD. It's our study. It will be our study. It's not GAC's study. We're just using their mechanisms in order to help us do that. It is our study. It's not connected.

Mr. Nick Whalen: That's interesting. How much is the study going to cost altogether as a project?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: About \$354,000.

Mr. Nick Whalen: And it's outsourced to GAC.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: It's outsourced to OECD.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: In terms of your other question with regard to the deputy ministers and the deputy minister committees, I don't know the names, but I can get back to the committee with regard to that.

Mr. Nick Whalen: That's interesting. If the OECD is doing the study, presumably it will be made public at the end. Will it be available for other departments?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: It will be available for other departments to see, and we will be tabling it with the deputy minister committee on policy innovation.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Our committee has heard a fair amount about different management approaches to change management within government. We heard some presentations on an agile approach to technology implementation where projects are broken down to as small as is reasonably possible and as tight a time frame as is reasonably possible. Minister Brison says he's in favour of this approach to change management.

Is PCO attempting to implement an agile approach in its information management and information technology project that we're talking about with the \$32 million here? Is this more of a "Here's the project, go out and deliver for the full \$32 million" or is it broken down into more iterative pieces with more feedback loops built in?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: It's a very good question. The \$32 million is not for one project. There's a multitude of projects that we will undertake underneath that. I'll talk to two big projects.

One is the e-cabinet project, and that is where you look at the flexible kind of project management. We have certain deliverables that we want to meet on a regular basis, but we also don't want to lose opportunities as we're going through it. It's looking at the opportunity of what you get to deliver in terms of your overall project charter, making sure you deliver what was expected, and we were very successful in being able to do that in the first year.

Our second year, we're doing the same thing, but we're also making sure we're leveraging the right technologies. We're not trying to expand the scope, because that's where you find your projects can go off the rails. When you try to do too much, you lose sight of what your original objective is. We definitely take a rigorous project management approach to all our IT projects. The big one, e-cabinet, is on track.

Another very large one we're doing is the distribution of tablets. In PCO, we were a department that was very much governed by desktop. You couldn't move, and you didn't have any flexibility with moving to different organizations, taking your material with you, sticking with paper. We started that project last year, and we're continuing it and we're going to finish it this year. We are taking what is, again, very much a project management approach to doing that, making sure we build in pilots. We assess the pilots. We look at what's working well and what's not working well, and we adjust. We don't try to do it all at the same time. We try to roll it out on a systematic basis to make sure we have success at the end of it.

Our plan right now is that we've bought the equipment and we are rolling it out on a pilot basis. We'll come back to the people who are using it to find out what's working well, what's not working well, and where we have to adjust. Starting early in the winter, we'll start rolling it out to the rest of the employees within PCO.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go now to one three-minute intervention.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sansoucy, you have three minutes.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: My question is for the Public Service Commission representatives.

You have explained to us how the Public Service Resourcing System is used to staff positions. In November 2016, you issued a call for tenders for online testing services, including tests on this system. What motivated that? Did you have problems with system performance? Were improvements needed?

That leads me to ask how often the system is tested. A lot of personal information is being collected. How is the information protected?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Are you talking about our resourcing system?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Yes.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: We make sure we meet the highest standards of privacy protection. I can't give you any details on how we do it, but I can tell you that, to my knowledge, there haven't been any problems in this respect.

Is the study you're referring to from 2005?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: No, it's from 2016.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: I'm sorry; I didn't quite understand.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: You issued a call for tenders for online testing services, which included tests on the Public Service Resourcing System. Perhaps you haven't followed up on this call for tenders.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: I will have to provide an answer later. I don't have this information with me, unless my colleague does. I see he doesn't.

Mr. Chair, I will provide the committee with an answer later.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Please. The committee would find this information useful.

I'm really concerned about the literacy gaps that can be observed. We know that 20% of our population are functionally illiterate, and that 50% of that population have problems with reading comprehension.

You have told us a lot about the innovative measures you have taken to reach out to young people. We know that not all jobs are specialized. What tools do you use to help different groups of people, particularly those with literacy problems, but also those whose first language isn't French or English?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Thank you for your question.

Our tests are adapted to all needs. About 50 industrial psychologists work with us. They ensure that our tests meet all possible international standards and that they are adapted for all needs, whether they are related to disability and learning issues or problems of all kinds. We are constantly reviewing our tests, both paper and online. Increasingly, our tests are done electronically. We make sure that the language, skills and knowledge tests are well-suited to all these needs.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Okay, thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, I think we have time for one more complete seven-minute round, and we will start with Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for being with us this afternoon.

I want to talk briefly to the Transportation Safety Board. When it's determined which national body investigates, am I right to assume it's where the accident or occurrence took place?

• (1210)

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We look first at the state of occurrence. If we talk about aviation—

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Yes, aviation.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: It's different under different modes. We look at the state of occurrence. Where did the incident or accident happen? In the simplest terms, if a foreign carrier is involved in an accident in Canada, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada has the mandate to conduct the investigation, but signatories to ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization, can provide accredited representatives because we may need information from that state—the stated manufacturer, the operator of the aircraft. If it's a Canadian-registered operator or there's a significant Canadian interest, for example, a manufacturer or the number of people on board who are Canadian, but it happens in another state and that state has a strong, independent body capable of conducting investigations, that state will carry out the investigation. Then we will assist under ICAO annex 13 as an accredited rep. However, the state of occurrence conducts the investigation.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That's what I assumed, based on your evidence earlier today. I just wanted to confirm that because it wasn't asked expressly. Thank you for that clarification.

Madam Fox, most of your supplementary estimates deal with salaries and benefits. Is most of it flowing from the new collective bargaining agreement, and if so, are these payments retroactive?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: Yes. It's the new increases as a result of the collective agreements signed in the past few months. It affects this fiscal year as well as retroactively up to this signing and the two previous fiscal years. It's a combination of the increases and the retroactive payments.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That's all encompassed in this one.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: That's correct.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Therefore, we should presume it won't be such a large amount once the retroactivity has caught up.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We do know that this is the amount required to cover off our operating deficit for this fiscal year. We're in discussion with central agencies like Treasury Board and Finance, but there will be a future impact because the increases were higher than anticipated.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Right. Am I right to assume it won't be as large? Is all the retroactivity being done in this fiscal year? That's my point.

Ms. Kathleen Fox: Yes, all the retroactivity is being covered off in this fiscal year. The issue going forward will be the impact of the increases on future requirements.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Borbey, I want to talk a bit about your report and your comments. I'll start with the reduction in application time for students, which is a good thing, I think. It shows some good innovation is happening in your department, so kudos for that.

Was there a significant increase in the number of applications because of this?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: This is interesting because I looked at the numbers, and we didn't necessarily see a huge increase in the number of applications. However, the applications came in earlier. I was just looking at the curve, when they came in through the period just before the summer, because I mostly looked at the last summer period. I think it's a really good thing because it allows more time for managers to select and for more referrals. That was an immediate impact.

We're still looking at the data. We don't quite have all the data yet in whether it also led to more hirings. I can't tell you that at this point. Intuitively, from what I'm hearing, yes, there have been more hirings in the last summer period. In working with all deputy ministers, the clerk sent a signal that we wanted to improve the student experience this last summer and increase the number of students because we're conscious that they are potentially a very important pool for future renewal.

Clearly our work led to much quicker applications, and that pool being established more quickly, and allowed managers to draw on it more quickly.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That's good to hear. Thank you for that.

Briefly, the only money you're asking for in the supplementary estimates (B) is the CFIA transfer, which is an annual transfer.

•(1215)

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Yes.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: You say you are working on having it included in annual reference levels for future years. How is that going?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: That's subject to Treasury Board approval through the annual reference level updates. It's just a technical issue. All departments and agencies contribute to the money we then invest

in maintaining and upgrading our resourcing system, so that's their share. We manage that on behalf of the collectivity.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: It would just technically be cleaner accounting, I think, if you could get—

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Yes.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: You wouldn't have to....

We always like having you before our committee.

Mr. Patrick Borbey: It's a pleasure.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I'm going to speak with Ms. Ramcharan.

I don't have the acronym yet, because it's a new one. I'm pretty good at acronyms, but what are we calling the new national security committee?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: It's NSICOP.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: NSICOP sounds pretty good, actually. It's on at 10 a.m. Wednesdays on your local channel.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I notice there's funding of \$2.2 million. Is that covering the operating costs until there is budgetary permission voted on that hasn't happened yet, or is this start-up capital as well as operating costs? Will some of it be paid once that committee is fully funded?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: The money we have right now is for a couple of things. One, because the NSICOP, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, hasn't received royal assent, there needed to be a department that could start things going. We have monies associated with salaries for the members as well as the chair and the executive director. Once the executive director is there, we expect him or her to get royal assent. They will have access to all of their money for the next five years.

The \$2 million-plus we have is really a portion for salaries of roughly about \$300,000. It's not big. Most of it is about accommodation, the fit-up for their space. Should we not spend that money by the time they receive royal assent, all of that money will be transferred directly for them and will be under their control.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Right. But is there any—

The Chair: We'll have to cut it off there, but thank you very much for that.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

The Chair: We now have Mr. Shipley for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you very much.

Let me go, first of all, to Madam Fox.

Thank you so much. It's interesting. I think you're the only one who's not asking for more staff, but I was curious that you said in your opening statement that there is a shortfall and the money is needed for extra salaries, so we get that, but if the amount agreed on was higher than anticipated, why would that be?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: When we were provided information early on during the collective bargaining process to commence estimating what the retroactive and future increases would be, it was based on the assumption of 0.5%. The actual collective agreement increases assigned to date were 1.25%, and it also included, in some cases, additional signing bonuses or increments. That's why the total impact of the collective agreements was higher than anticipated and affects not only the current year and the future, but also the retroactive payments we were anticipating paying.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you.

I appreciate the explanation. It maybe raises some concern in terms of the negotiation when you have that much time to prepare—and it's not your fault or concern—when you're projecting 0.5% and you get 1.25%. Anyway, I'll leave it at that right now.

My next question is for you, Ms. Fox. I just want to follow up on what happens through the Transportation Safety Board when an event happens. We could talk about the flights that Mr. McCauley talked about or Lac-Mégantic.

You raised the report. You raised some recommendations based on the events that have happened. Can you talk to me about how that gets acted upon when it goes to Transport Canada? Do you put in recommended timelines for when that action should take place?

• (1220)

Ms. Kathleen Fox: When an occurrence happens, we make a preliminary assessment as to whether we're going to conduct a full investigation or not. We want to make sure that we're going to spend those resources wisely in conducting a full investigation. We collect data, we analyze the data, we write a report, and we publish it. That's a long process.

The report has findings, which are lessons learned from the accident, and there might be recommendations. We don't make recommendations on every report. We make recommendations when we've identified high-risk, systemic deficiencies that need to be addressed that aren't currently being addressed. If we make a recommendation to, in this case, Transport Canada, the minister has 90 days to respond as to how and if the department is going to address the recommendation. We assess that. We're not prescriptive in our recommendations. We don't put in timelines. We recognize that some of these are going to take a while because they might be changes to regulations or standards, they might be new technology, or they might require extensive consultation and might require harmonization with other countries. However, that is the general process.

If we look at all our recommendations issued since 1990, not all of them have been addressed at Transport Canada, but roughly three-quarters of them have been fully addressed and have been assessed our highest rating of fully satisfactory.

Mr. Bev Shipley: In your mind, is the 75% a good percentage, a good assessment in terms of the reaction to compliance?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: We would like to see higher numbers. If we look by mode, we've issued about 20 recommendations in pipeline, and 100% of those have been addressed. In rail and marine, we're in the mid to high 80% that have been addressed. Aviation is lagging at around the low sixties. That's the area where we're trying to get more

attention, either from the regulator or from industry, because industry can take steps to address these recommendations without waiting for the regulator to act.

Mr. Bev Shipley: That's interesting, because I think you said earlier that—I forget the word—accidents or incidents of air travel were decreasing. Is that correct?

Ms. Kathleen Fox: That is correct, but I would make a distinction here between an accident and an incident or occurrence. We also investigate occurrences where safety might have been at risk but it didn't necessarily culminate in an accident. In the example of two aircraft that came closer together than they should have, we would investigate that, but there was no accident.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Okay.

My next question is for Madam Ramcharan.

I'm trying to get a handle on something that's new in the present government in terms of the mandate tracer initiative to see if the ministers are keeping up to their commitments. Do you have any idea of what the cost of that might be?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Not specifically. We didn't seek additional resources to do it. When we're working with Canada.ca, the government instituted a process where it centralized all the web service's functions into one area in order to make it more cost-effective for government, so the costs we have right now in terms of developing that website have all been in-house resources. It has been part of the existing resource package that we have. We have used resources that we have access to in terms of developing it, so we don't have a specific cost for it.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Okay. However, PCO is certainly one of the ones that have been adding salaries and adding employees all the time, so it might be a thought if we don't have some idea of what that cost is with what outcomes are.

Really, everything we do here is about outcomes. If we can't measure that because we don't have any costs and we're just saying, "Well, the existing people do it", but while the existing people are doing it we're hiring more people and we've had an increase in salaries, there should be something for the committee to give us a bit of an idea of the effectiveness of that, because it is an internal issue.

Are there some thoughts that you would talk about? It really is about having someone on the outside rather than internally do those assessments. Through PCO, have there been discussions to the effect that this sounds like maybe not a bad idea? Should we actually have an outside agency look at that and do the measurement, and then have some cost assessment to it?

The Chair: Madam Ramcharan, I'm afraid you'll have to give the answer to that in written form to our committee.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Or it would be a yes or no.

The Chair: You can only get away with that once or twice in a meeting.

•(1225)

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you. Maybe I'll get another chance later.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Sansoucy, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

I'll continue with the questions I started asking the Privy Council Office representative, particularly on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Ultimately, the role of the Privy Council Office was to provide financial and administrative support for the implementation of the

[*English*]

legal case management system.

[*Translation*]

Earlier, my questions related to the training that was offered to ensure that this system would be implemented successfully. However, this system is complex by its very nature. I'm coming back to this to allow you to respond.

I would like to know how much it cost to implement the system and what steps were taken to implement it properly.

[*English*]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

There are two parts to the question. Was training provided for the system? The system that we used for the legal case management system is called Ringtail. It's a system that we use within government. It was procured for the commission of inquiry. We started the procurement in February, and it was put in place and available to them on May 1. As part of thinking about that system, we wanted to make sure that they had adequate training, so part of the contract that we put in place was to make sure that the company that has the software could provide training to the commission.

As soon as the commission is interested in taking on that training and getting more involved, they have a venue through which they can get that training, but they haven't started to fundamentally use that system just yet. As you know, they've been very busy, with the number of hearings, so they are going to have to think about how to do that, but there is a system and a process in place by which they can access training to use that software.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: This system will be used to analyze hundreds of thousands of videos, transcripts of electronic documents, articles and briefs. If I understand correctly, when the commission of inquiry is at this stage, it will have the financial support needed, and its staff will be properly trained to optimize the use of this system.

Is that correct?

[*English*]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Yes. We don't determine who gets the training or who uses the software. It will be for the commission to decide which of their people, whether it be two or three or 10 or 12, require the training and who will be using the software. What we do

is make sure that they have access to the system, the software, and the licences so they can do that, and that the financing is there and available for them to use to order and access that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Okay.

On another topic, I would like to know if the Privy Council Office plays a role in the commission of inquiry's work to encourage the participation of Canadians. In your presentation, you indicated that you had been involved in several consultations. You talked about openness and transparency. It is clear that you supported the consultation of as many Canadians as possible.

Do you also play a role in helping the commission of inquiry to encourage Canadians to participate in it?

[*English*]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The commission of inquiry is different from the regular operations of the Privy Council. The commission of inquiry is set up as an independent commission. The role that PCO plays in that commission is really that of financial administrative support. We very much work in an arm's-length fashion in terms of what their work plan is, what they are doing, how they engage with Canadians, and their communications. What we endeavour to do is provide support from an administrative perspective when they say they want to do something, or they want to hire a person, or they want certain software or certain support. We try to make sure we get the mechanisms in for them, on a very quick basis, so that they can do that.

With any of the work the commission is involved with, they decide how to do it and how to structure it. The role of PCO in any commission of inquiry is really to let the commission have its independence and determine how to achieve its mandate in its terms of reference.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: I understand the independence of the commission because that was clear. However, you have a support role. In your brief, you said you were there to support the Prime Minister. In fact, he said very clearly that this was the priority issue of his government. We are aware of the importance of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

You have clear expertise in consulting Canadians and ensuring that all the tools are in place. With my question, I don't mean to interfere in the role of the commission of inquiry.

With your expertise, how will you support them in terms of the content and how to achieve it? I understand the concept of the independence of the content. As everyone knows, the transparency and openness cost \$24.2 million. How can the expertise that has been developed support the important work of the national inquiry?

•(1230)

[English]

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: There's not just PCO involved. The Minister of CIRNA, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, the new department that was created, has a role for non-administrative support to the commission. As you're aware, the department itself did a pre-inquiry process. It went out around the country to meet with families and individuals to understand better what's happening in the area of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. They have a role to play.

Since June, that department, PCO, and others have been coming together regularly to be available to the commission should it ask for some support, assistance, or guidance in terms of helping it achieve its mandate. I reiterate again that the commission is set up to be very independent. We only offer our support when asked. We rely on the commission to figure out its work plan, how it's going to do it, how it's going to achieve it, the people it's going to meet with, and how it's going to communicate its actions. It has terms of reference that are posted—I'm sorry, I don't have them with me—that give it exactly what it's expected to do as part of its mandate, the roles that we play in PCO, as well as the roles that the Minister of CIRNA plays in terms of its overall support.

We really try to not provide any policy-type expertise to the commission unless it specifically asks for it.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: It cost \$34.4 million?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our final intervention will come from Madam Ratansi.

You have seven minutes, please.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Ms. Ramcharan, I have a few questions for you.

In your risk-based internal audit plan, it said PCO would complete a follow-up audit of information technology security in 2017-18 that was previously planned for 2016-17. Could you tell us what the status of this internal audit is? We're all very concerned. IT has been a boondoggle for just about everybody here, so could you give us an update on that, please?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: I'd like to start by saying two things.

We had a preliminary audit that was conducted a few years ago. It identified a number of different opportunities for PCO to undertake in order to stabilize its information management and information technology system. That's a little bit of the reason that we've had so much funding come in: to help us actually do that. As of a few months ago, we have been able to address all of the previous audit recommendations associated with information management and information technology, so we're very pleased with that.

In terms of 2017-18 and the review that is proposed, again, that hasn't been undertaken as of yet. When you think about your areas of risk, IM and IT is always one of those areas of risk for departments,

especially within the Privy Council Office where we want to ensure the safeguarding of information, of technologies, and of the materials that we have at our disposal. That will be started this fiscal year. It probably won't be completed until next fiscal year. Typically what we do with all of our audits, as well as the recommendations, is post them so that they're publicly available.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: In that process, would you be hiring external advisers or using internal expertise to manage your modernization process?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: In terms of our IT modernization process itself, we will be hiring some professional services, people with expertise from the outside.

Because it's a large project that took place last year, and for the most part the significant spending is this year, we didn't hire permanent employees because it was such a defined time frame with regard to that. Most of the money that you see there for the funding really is related to outside contractors and outside professional services to help support us.

•(1235)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Is that a sufficient amount, or would you be coming back and asking for more?

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: This is a sufficient amount. We won't be coming back. Unless we were going to undertake a new initiative that we currently envision, we won't be coming back for more additional resources for IM and IT.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: In terms of the cybersecurity threat, I went to Bangladesh recently and I was given a loaner phone, because somehow Bangladesh is supposed to be a terrible country—I don't know. However, what I would like to know is whether there is any threat to our electoral system that you, PCO, or anybody has identified.

Ms. Kami Ramcharan: With regard to vulnerabilities associated with our electoral system, there is a variety of both paper-based and electronic systems that are used to carry out elections in Canada, which means there are potential cyber-threats that vary by jurisdiction. It's not just in one place where that exists. Since federal elections are largely paper-based, Elections Canada has a number of legal, procedural, informational technology measures in place to mitigate those potential threats. Political parties and politicians vulnerable to cyber-attacks, including cyber-espionage, information theft, spreading of misleading information, we see as the biggest risk, as opposed to an actual system of election.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Thank you.

Mr. Borbey, welcome back.

We have been listening to the President of the Treasury Board, who would like to see a wider diversity at the upper management level. I'm wondering if you have any statistics on how successful you have been in the ADM and DM positions, upper management, in terms of diversity, diversity meaning women, because generally we see that women are in positions but not in management positions. We'd like that gender balance, number one. Number two would be diversity meaning indigenous and other visible minorities. Do you have any statistics on that?

Mr. Patrick Borbey: Thank you for the question. Certainly, employment equity in the federal system is a shared responsibility between the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Privy Council Office

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: —the Public Service Commission. You just took over her job.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Patrick Borbey: —the Public Service Commission, I'm sorry.

We have been making steady progress in terms of women representation among the executive ranks. I have data dating back to 2015-16. We're still working on our most recent data, but steadily the increase has been happening.

The most recent data was 47.3% of our executives were female, compared to a workforce availability for executives in the workforce at large of 47.8%. This would indicate a 0.5% gap. I'm hopeful that over the last two years, once we get the data, we'll see that gap pretty well disappear. For aboriginal people it's not so good. We're at about 3.7% compared to a workforce availability of 5.2%, so clearly there are some issues there. For persons with disabilities, it's 5.1%, compared to an availability of 2.3%. Mind you, these are workforce availabilities that date back to the census of 2011. I suspect that once we have the new census data, there will be gaps that will be identified. For visible minorities, again we're closing the gap there. We're at 9.4% of executives compared to 9.5% workforce availability.

We're also looking at what I call the pipeline, people applying to jobs in the federal government or people from the outside being

hired to entry-level jobs. Again, in those cases we see visible minorities or people who identify as visible minorities clearly outperforming workforce availability. The most surprising data I saw recently for our student applications in the last summer, 32% self-identified as a visible minority. To me, that indicates that the pipeline is quite healthy.

I think we have more problems when it comes to persons with disabilities and aboriginal people, where we don't get as many applications as I think we should.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Am I done?

The Chair: You are.

● (1240)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Oh, my lord.

The Chair: Time is precious, Madam Ratansi, fleeting.

To our witnesses, thank you very much for being here today, and thank you for all the information. It has been most informative, most helpful. Should you have any additional information you think would be of benefit to our committee, we invite you to please make those submissions directly to our clerk.

With that, thank you once again for your appearance. We hope to see you, at least some of you, again soon.

We are suspended for a few moments, colleagues, while we wait to go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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