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Chair

The Honourable Larry Bagnell

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.)): Good morning. Welcome to the 141st meeting of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Welcome, Nathan.

Our first order of business today is the consideration of the votes under the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the supplementary estimates (B), 2018-19, and the interim estimates 2019-20.

We are happy to be joined today by Stéphane Perrault, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer. He is accompanied by officials from Elections Canada: Michel Roussel, deputy chief electoral officer, electoral events and innovation; and Hughes St-Pierre, deputy chief electoral officer, internal services.

Thank you all for being here.

Before you make your opening statement, I just want to explain in layman's English what we're doing.

There are two estimates. The second one is the interim estimates for the first part of next year, up to June 23, so they have money to operate while the budget is being approved. The other estimate is the supplementary estimates for the end of this year. If they're going to spend more, then it has to be approved. They're actually spending less, but because there are the two votes, the one that we have say over and then the statutory one.... In the one we have say over, they're actually spending more in this last period of the year. In the one that's statutory, they're actually spending less. In fact, it's even less, so the total is minus. That's why we're approving this, because we have to approve the part that we have a say over.

I think there's something small here that's maybe a bit misleading in the draft you got from the Library of Parliament. It says, "The Chief Electoral Officer is authorized to enter into commitments not exceeding \$39,217,905." That's for the whole year. They're not authorized for that until we approve the budget, but that would be the projection, roughly, for the year.

I'll now turn it over to you, Monsieur Perrault. It's great to have you back here again.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Perrault (Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to be here, especially since we are in the new building. It's the first time I've been in here.

I welcome this opportunity to appear before the committee today to present Elections Canada's supplementary and interim estimates and update you on our preparations for the general elections.

Today, the committee is voting on Elections Canada's 2018-19 Supplementary Estimates "B" as well as its 2019-20 Interim Supply.

The supplementary estimates are related to budget 2018 measures, which rebalance Elections Canada's expenditures between its parliamentary and statutory authorities. This allows Elections Canada to increase the number of its permanent employees, thereby avoiding higher contracting expenditures. While there is an increase of \$1.3 million to the appropriation in 2018-19, this results in a net decrease of \$26,000 to the fiscal framework over the same period.

In other words, casual, fixed-term or contractual resources that we had and that we paid on an ongoing basis in accordance with the statutory authority will now be indeterminate resources paid under the parliamentary appropriation on which the committee is voting, which is appropriate. So it's simply a transfer of money from one credit to another.

Today, the committee is also voting on Elections Canada's Interim Supply for 2019-20, which totals \$9.8 million. This represents the salaries of some 440 indeterminate positions for the first quarter of the fiscal year, beginning April 1, 2019. It does not include other agency expenditures, which are funded from a statutory appropriation.

Elections Canada is now entering the final stretch of its preparations for the next general election. Chief among these is the implementation of the recent legislative changes enacted by Parliament under the Elections Modernization Act. While the act provides for a general implementation period of six months, it allows me to bring provisions into force earlier if the necessary preparations are completed. My intention is to bring provisions of the law into force as soon as that is the case. As of January 19, certain provisions for which little or no preparation was required are already in force through posting in the *Canada Gazette*.

I am pleased to report that our IT systems have been updated to reflect C-76 modifications and will have been rigorously tested by the end of this month.

Changes to the political financing regime will be implemented in consultation with political parties through the established opinions, guidelines and interpretation notes process. Changes will be in place for the pre-writ period beginning June 30.

We are also reaching out to potential third parties—they are not known—and online platforms to inform them of their new obligations under the law.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Our general preparations for the election are progressing as planned and local election administrators are fully mobilized. A key focus for returning officers has been improving the selection of poll sites from the elector's point of view, considering accessibility, travel distance and familiarity.

For this election, we are also increasing the number of educational institutions where electors can vote by a special ballot, from 39 campuses in the last election to 115. This is part of our general efforts to assist voters who are away from home during the election. As in the past, returning officers will also deliver voting services for those who may be hospitalized, living in long-term care facilities or at remote work camps.

Returning officers have also increased the number of advance polls and advance polling locations. One of the benefits will be reduced travel distances in rural areas. Combined with other improvements, electors can also expect faster services when they vote at the next election. With the completion of Bill C-76 changes scheduled for this month, our IT infrastructure will be fully ready to be deployed to support a general election, both at headquarters and in the field.

This spring the agency is conducting an election simulation in Gatineau and in five local offices representative of a variety of settings across the country. This exercise is an opportunity to test our business processes and our IT systems in a setting that closely resembles an actual general election. As part of this, election workers will be hired, trained and will participate in simulated voting exercises. This will allow us to evaluate the quality of our training material and manuals and to make any necessary adjustments.

Finally, work continues to improve the coverage and currency of the national register of electors. We have been conducting regular mailings to invite electors who just turned 18 in the past year to register, with more than 50,000 added as a result. This spring, through our pre-writ communications campaign, we will also focus on increasing the number of electors in the register and updating information for those who have recently moved. In addition, the register will continue to benefit from regular updates from provincial jurisdictions and federal and provincial data partners.

In this regard, the provision of Bill C-76 that authorizes Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to share with Elections Canada information on non-citizens is now in force, as of January 19. I am looking forward to finalizing arrangements this spring to access data, which will contribute to improving the integrity of the national register of electors.

A key aspect of our preparation focuses on electoral security. In the current environment, securing the next election requires efforts of many institutions. Protecting the election is a vital challenge for all participants in a democratic process. Political parties, media, digital platforms, civil society groups, and Canadians all must play a role. Over the last few years we have made important improvements to

the security of our IT infrastructure and are providing IT security training to all our personnel at headquarters and in the field.

In the spring, and as we get closer to the election, we will be launching a major information campaign to give Canadians accessible information on how to register and vote. We will also be monitoring the environment, including social media, to detect inaccurate information about the voting process and quickly correct it.

Finally, we continue to work with the commissioner of Canada elections and security and intelligence agencies. Together we are conducting exercises using multiple scenarios to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear, and that proper governance is established to coordinate our actions, should it be required. Overall, these efforts will both reinforce our protections and increase our resilience to possible attempts to disrupt the election.

With only months before the start of the 43rd general election, I believe that Elections Canada is where it needs to be in terms of its preparations. Canadians can continue to count on Elections Canada to ensure the electoral process remains accessible, convenient and secure, and to provide them any information they may require to exercise their right to vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are here to answer questions that members may have.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Perhaps in your pilot elections, you could use 17-year-olds from schools, so they get used to voting.

I propose we do one round of the normal schedule and then open up the floor to whoever would like to ask questions, if that's okay.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Thank you. It's good to see you all again.

We've dealt with the legislation, and here we are again on the estimates. You are getting to be regular customers. Don't get me wrong, we're not sick of seeing you. You're doing wonderful stuff.

You said that most of \$1.8 million is going toward a temporary hiring process for the upcoming election. Is that correct?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Sorry, where is that?

Mr. Scott Simms: You mentioned it's part of it, \$1.8 million.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The \$1.3 million?

Mr. Scott Simms: It's \$1.3 million, okay.

I'm more concerned about the temporary hirings that you are talking about coming up in the spring.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's a different matter. We have begun what we call ramping up. We hire, in preparation for the election, terms and casuals to increase our capacity as we get closer to the election. That increase is based on our statutory authority. These are terms and casuals. They are not covered by the financial figures discussed this morning. All of that is based on the statutory authority.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. You say your IT is ready to go for the next election and you have a great degree of confidence in the systems that you have right now based on Bill C-76 modifications and so on and so forth. What have you tested thus far to give you that kind of confidence?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: We do a number of regular testing schedules, what we call ESI. I'm sorry for the acronyms.

On a periodic basis when we develop new software we then do testing of the software. Then we do integrated testing with all of the other software that they interact with. We had one scheduled last fall where all of the updates that were done then were tested before they were rolled out and used for elections. Then after that we had all of the changes done that were necessary for Bill C-76. They were tested within the systems. Then we have integrated testing that is being done right now. It will be done just before the end of February. Then when we do the simulation, we will stress test the systems in a simulated election with the volumes and the peaks and valleys of an election. We will do some security penetration testing as well.

Mr. Scott Simms: Security is a big part of the simulation testing that you are doing here in Gatineau and five areas. Is security going to be a big part of that as well?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Security is a big part of everything we do. When we develop the systems, there are security controls that are checked, that are audited, and then there is the testing once it's completed. Then there is integrated testing. At every step of the way we have security in mind.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

One of the other things I think worked really well in the last election would be the special ballots. The number of educational institutions where electors can vote by special ballot goes from 39 to 115.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's correct.

Mr. Scott Simms: As a percentage, what does that cover for the institutions? Obviously, it's not all of them.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Not all of them.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's obviously a substantial increase from last time.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: If we don't have the numbers we can get back to you, but our standard was contacting everyone who had, first of all, 4,000 students or more, and then looking at areas in the country where even though it did not meet that number threshold it was a significant institution for the geography.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: We can come back to you for the exact numbers but it's a very significant portion.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Based on that plus the simulations that you are running, and merge that with the changes made because of Bill C-76, it seems to me you have a pretty good level of confidence from now up until June 30, the start of the pre-writ period.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I think that's pretty much how I would put it. We cannot be overconfident. Again, security is never a guarantee, but we work closely with the Communications Security Establishment. They monitor our system 24-7. They have their devices on our data centre. We rolled out a new data centre last September. We really are, I think, where we need to be in doing the things that we need to do. There is still some work to do. There are still some security improvements to make but we'll be there.

• (1120)

Mr. Scott Simms: That's actually my next question.

Is there anything right now that's giving any pause for thought? In essence, what keeps you up at night, sir?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I generally sleep well.

I think we're doing what we need to do. We have a busy schedule ahead of us until June. We have some further work to do on the security side, but it's planned and we're working with partners and things are getting done.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

On the local level, my riding just hired a new returning officer. Several others have done the same.

What is going to be the most noticeable difference for the workers at one riding? I'll start with that. Go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I'll say a few things. For this election—

Mr. Scott Simms: What's the big difference?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The big difference is advance polls. Two things will be different for the poll workers. One is the hours of advance polls. Remember, it used to be from noon until eight o'clock. Now it's from nine to nine, a large increase. For the workers, that's a big challenge, so we are looking at doing some shift work, which we didn't do in the past but we can do under the new rules, to give some relief for some workers during the day. These are long hours for four days in a row. That's one big change.

The other major change is that, even though we're not deploying technology for the voting process, we've simplified the paper process. We're using it in these by-elections. We've tested it. The streamlined paper process is a lot simpler for poll workers to understand and use. That will assist them in the training, in reducing record-keeping errors, hopefully, and increase the speed of processing voters, especially at advance polls.

These are the main changes for the workers.

Mr. Scott Simms: For the voters themselves, there won't be a huge, noticeable difference in how they—?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: They may not see that. We're hoping they will not see lineups. You'll remember at the last election we had a 75% increase at the advance polls. At every election before, we had a 10% increase at the advance polls. It went up to 75%.

We are now anticipating this is going to be an ongoing feature. If you look at other jurisdictions around the world, they're getting close to 40% and sometimes above that, so we need to prepare for that. To do that, we've increased the hours. We've increased the number of advance polls by 23%. We've streamlined the paper process. With these three measures, we think we can offer better service at the next election than at the previous one.

Mr. Scott Simms: From my riding....

The Chair: Your riding will have to wait.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Simms: I'll just leave it at that.

The Chair: Ms. Kusie.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Perrault, Mr. Roussel and Mr. St-Pierre, thank you for being with us today.

You talked a lot about security. Last week, there was a press conference on cybersecurity. In my opinion, one organization wasn't included in the process, and my first question is about that.

[*English*]

Do you believe that Elections Canada should have been included? I do believe that. It has been stated that there was foreign influence in the 2015 election, based on what we have seen not only in Brexit and the United States, but around the world. The CFCA determined there will be an increase in 2019, and electoral processes indicate that.

Do you feel your organization, Elections Canada, should have been included in the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force initiated by the government last week?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It's a very good question. Because it was a government announcement, and we're not part of that, we didn't have a chance to explain our role, so I welcome this opportunity.

We will not formally be among the five public servants who would be called upon to speak publicly, if necessary. But as I explained, we're doing scenarios with the security establishment, the intelligence community. All the players who will be feeding the

information to that group of five will also be working with Elections Canada.

The group of five will be speaking on matters that are not within my mandate. For example, if a party database is hacked and used to distract voters from their polling location, that's my role. I need to step out and speak publicly to that. That is not the role of this group. But the hacking itself may involve foreign actors, so CSIS, Global Affairs and CSE have an interest.

It is not a single entity's responsibility and we will be working together. But in speaking publicly, I will be speaking to the electoral process matter and that group will be speaking to the other aspects.

● (1125)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: You mentioned that you feel you were excluded because you are an independent non-partisan agency. Don't you think for that specific reason you should be a part of it?

The other five individuals are making the critical decisions, first of all, that the other parties should be informed as to potential influence. We have no say as to what information we will receive until it is released to us by the decision of these five public servants—and as a former 15-year member of Global Affairs Canada, I say “public servants” respectfully. Then they are left with the decision as to when to release this information to the public through this Liberal government.

Don't you think that is the very reason you should be a part of this important body—the fact that you are non-partisan; that you are an independent organization; that you report directly to Parliament and not to the Liberal government? Doesn't that make you feel, even more so that you should be a part of this critical organization?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I certainly need to be part of the conversations that relate to the security of our electoral process. Now, I'm not here to defend the government's proposal. I do though, having been a public servant throughout my career, have a high degree of confidence that public servants do the right thing and that they're loyal to the public service. I have no reason to think that these very senior public servants would not do that.

Are there ways of improving the process? I don't think that's for me to speak to. That's the government's announcement.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Further to that, another concern beyond influence of course is interference.

We on this side of the table put forward 200 amendments regarding Bill C-76. Only a handful were accepted, while many of them, we think, would have further contributed to the stopping of foreign interference, including the watertight mechanism of segregated bank accounts, accounting for funds not only through the writ period but also in the pre-writ period. This is starting to seep beyond elections into other sectors of society, industry approval processes on things that are very critical.

What role do you feel Elections Canada plays in an effort to prevent interference in Canadian elections? What safeguards or mechanisms do you have in place in an attempt to resist these?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: There are many aspects to this question. I may not get a chance to capture them all.

You started with the political financing rules on third parties. As you know the new regime right now has been significantly increasing.... It has a requirement for segregated bank accounts. It has pre-writ limits. It will cover activities that were not previously regulated. Foreign money could have come in to support these activities that are now regulated. Our role there is to try to promote these rules in compliance with these rules and make sure that the reporting is done. At the end of the election we'll have to assess that, assess whether that was sufficient, or whether we need to restrict further. I'll be making recommendations to Parliament on that point after the election.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I look forward to that. In a nutshell, what are your biggest hurdles to implementing the changes to Bill C-76 in time for the 2019 election? Where do you need support? What should we as the opposition be looking for to assist you in your most challenging procedures to properly implement Bill C-76, Mr. Perrault?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Thank you for the offer. I think at this point in time I have what I need.

The real challenge is the time, and the time between now and the pre-writ period to engage third parties and social media platforms. We are, for example, working with the main social media platforms so that they understand the new registry requirements, but we don't know how many platforms out there hit the threshold. We will be pushing that information, but we can't do a sort of hand-holding exercise with those platforms. Similarly, a third party is, by law, anybody who is involved in the election other than a party candidate or district association. We will be reaching out to the ones who have been registered in the past who are sort of repeat customers, or who spent more money. We will be reaching out to them, but beyond that, our only way of reaching the general population is basically through our website or social media. The rules are really complicated. If you look at the third parties, they have to submit up to five reports, including four prior to the election. This is a very high degree of reporting that they have to understand and comply with. That's the main challenge.

• (1130)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Mr. Perrault.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Kusie.

Mr. Cullen, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you.

It's nice to see you again, Mr. Perrault, and your colleagues as well.

When we talk about the threats to our election, we've had enough experiences around the world to understand that the threats are real. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Absolutely.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They are towards Canada as well. I think some Canadians like to think that we're a nice country and who would ever want to try to hack into our elections. The Canadian intelligence services have also identified that threat, come the 2019 election, which you're well aware of. Is that correct?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You mentioned in a recent interview that the parties' databases particularly are the weak link in the cybersecurity chain. Is that comment fair?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I didn't mean that as a criticism, but that is what the Communications Security Establishment assessment is. That's not my assessment.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right, and that assessment from our security establishment gives you concern.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It does.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I've been looking around for an analogy for this to understand and learn from the examples of our democratic allies, the U.S., France and the U.K., with the Brexit vote and the citing of fake news. Let's deal with that as an element.

Someone trying to bring in misrepresentations or exaggerations has been a part of the debate in politics since politics was first invented, yet we have a new scenario. Parties have made promises that they have broken, such as that the last election would be the last to have first past the post, and all those other wonderful red book things from ages past. That's existed. What we have now is fake news, which I would, if you'll follow me on this analogy, liken to a match. The party databases, this rich content of very specific details about many Canadians and what their preferences are, are like the dry timber in the forest, and social media is like the wind. These lies can be weaponized now unlike ever before, and weaponized in that they're targeting particular voters on their motivated issues. Is that a fair analogy in terms of what the threat is?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Certainly that is a significant threat, yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You said, about the bill that is now law in Canada, Bill C-76, that you were disappointed that political parties weren't required to follow privacy laws like other organizations. Is that true?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think you said "very disappointed".

That weak link we talk about, does that not then give opportunity for that threat to be greater? I'll give an example right now. If a fake news item is posted on a free social media platform, any one—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube—it doesn't fall under election advertising laws, does it?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It does not, but it may run afoul of other rules, like impersonation, or some disinformation rules in the Elections Act, but broadly speaking, you're correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Broadly speaking, right, and so the lie can be weaponized that way, and Elections Canada doesn't have any ability to note it, to identify it or to stop it even.

We have the case—I think colleagues would have seen this just yesterday or the day before in the by-election being run in Burnaby—where there was a completely made-up story trying to discredit the NDP leader in the by-election, to try to say, “Oh, look, this fellow is living in a massive mansion,” which is utterly untrue, and everybody who knows anything would realize that, but it spread through Twitter and Facebook, which themselves have no responsibilities under Bill C-76 that we can tell to stop the lie.

What happens then? Is this the one case where we could actually pursue this because it falls within the writ period and because it is misrepresenting? I think it's under section 91(1)(a) of the Elections Act.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: As you're well aware, there was a complaint that was made in that case. I won't comment on the specifics of the case, but the distinction between organic and paid content is important. If it's advertising, it is subject to a number of rules that do not apply to organic content.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: If it's a paid ad and it's misrepresenting a fact or mis-characterizing, it's simply lying about one of us as a candidate, and it's paid, then it is caught. You are allowed to investigate that.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The commissioner would be investigating that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Excuse me, the commissioner would.

• (1135)

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Now in terms of the rules that apply to advertisement, they're agnostic as to whether the ad is true or untrue. These are financial disclosure rules. This is a registry, right?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's right.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: In terms of the content, whether it's an ad or not, there are some minimal rules that cover impersonation of parties and candidates, impersonation of Elections Canada and some elements of disinformation, and that's an offence whether or not it's paid content.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So they are narrow rules. I think I'll take you up on this. If it's not paid, if it's a lie spread through Facebook and Twitter or YouTube, the commissioner can't be brought in. If it falls outside of section 91(1)(a), which is a very narrow bandwidth of a lie, the commissioner can't rule on it.

We're still in place where, as we saw in Brexit, as we saw in the Trump election and as we saw in the hacking of Macron's email in France, lies can be generated, databases can be hacked and then spread through social media, and no one can stop them.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's why precisely it's an all-of-government and all-of-society response, and we need to build some resilience. There's no silver bullet to this, and we can't have the Elections Act regulate all social media content.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Certainly stopping the access or ensuring the access to the party databases would have been good start, because without that, it's much harder to target voters.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Correct, and so we are meeting with the parties. Next week we're meeting with the parties, and we will have with us the Communications Security Establishment and CSIS meeting with them, and we will be reinforcing some security measures, including basic training.

You mentioned the American example. It was simply a phishing attempt that got the Democratic database. You know, I said parties don't have the resources that we have, and it's true, but resources aren't everything. Training is probably even more important.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: You have in all of the campaigns huge numbers of volunteers and paid workers, and the question is: Are these people, the ones who have access to the hardware and the software, trained? There's work that can be done.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: May I ask you a very specific question about this protocol committee, this panel?

We can all sit back as people who are engaged in electoral politics, and what if an announcement is made in the middle of a campaign that one of our databases has been hacked and been used by a foreign body, a foreign government even, to spread very targeted and malicious lies about some other party? Who has the power to delay the actual vote of an election?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The law is quite clear on that. I can make a recommendation to the Governor in Council only in cases where it is impracticable. That's the criterion, that it's impracticable for me to conduct the election. That has to do with the capacity of having poll sites, for example, if there's a flood, the register of electors being accessible or if there's an attack, but it does not deal with the parties' own challenges.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right.

Allow me this. That's a very high bar and a very specific scenario in which you could delay. This is not partisan in nature, but just a scenario we can imagine. The Liberal Party finds out it's been hacked. The panel realizes this. Every piece of data the Liberals have about every voter they've contacted, pro and con, is now known to a foreign entity. The Russians have targeted them with fake news about every Liberal candidate and the current Prime Minister. We are made aware of this. The public is made aware of this. You are receiving Facebook posts and messages that are straight-out lies. We can't pause the election. This panel can say, "The Liberals have been hacked. Any emails and Facebook notes you get are probably not true." Spreading lies about the Prime Minister is an example.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I think it has to be very clear: There is no legal mechanism to pause the election short of an operational constraint on Elections Canada. The law does not allow for that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It's remarkable, considering the threat that we face.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

Now we'll open it up to anyone who wants to ask questions.

Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): This actually is meant more for Nathan than it is for our guests.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Reid: I just want to observe that fake news has been out there ever since the serpent said to Adam and Eve, "If you try eating this apple, it's going to give you all kinds of awesome stuff." It seems to be what's actually happened in recent times. You can spread information more rapidly, as with this rumour, and that creates a situation in which, if you think of fake news as being mind viruses in a sense, they are more virulent. By the same token, I think the way of disproving them can also be spread more rapidly. I suspect what's needed is some kind of cultural shift to allow us to deal with the fact that something you hear at the last second ought to be treated with some suspicion. I think that, ultimately, is where we're going to find our cure for it. It doesn't mean we shouldn't look for policy solutions, but I think, as a practical matter, that's where we're likely to find our answer to last-minute assertions meant to throw us off our game.

I did have one thing for the CEO. I just wanted to say that I very much appreciate what you're trying to do with regard to rural polls, advance polls in particular, the scenario that I had some frustration with. I recognize that you are under a very difficult mandate, in that you have to make every polling place accessible to disabled persons. I think it's a 15-point test. That rules out a lot of otherwise ideal locations.

I'll just say this: I appreciate the work you're doing. I would be grateful if, in your post-election report, you could come back and indicate, number one, how successful you were, recognizing that you'll be more successful in some parts of the country and less in others for reasons that have to do with the inventory of buildings. I would also be grateful for any suggestions you might come back with as to how we need to deal with this. Maybe the 15-point test is too inflexible and actually only 12 of the 15 points are really key. I kind of threw that out as a.... Anyway, perhaps getting back to us and saying that there is a problem here but not there would help us in

making sure that kind of voting is available to all Canadians, everywhere.

• (1140)

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: May I have a bit of time to respond to this? It's an important point and I have a few things.

First, as I said, we are increasing the number of advance polling locations. That will give some assistance. One of the things we've changed is we used to draw polling divisions. Then the returning officers would bring up polling divisions, search for a polling location based on those 15 criteria and maybe not find something that was very suitable within the boundaries of a particular polling division. Now the sensible thing, which we're doing now, is to have returning officers identify the polling locations first and then draw the geography around them. That's a better approach. We know that 85% to 90% of the polling locations are the same, election after election. The ability to draw the boundaries knowing what the polling locations will be will reduce that. We've also built some technology, some software—

Mr. Scott Reid: They use a very similar technique for finding new locations for Giant Tiger stores, by the way.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: You might be interested in this. We have software that allows us to look at outliers. We can run the software and it will tell the returning officer, based on the road network, if there are voters who are actually nearer another polling place. It will also tell them if there are voters for whom there is an inordinate travel distance compared to the rest of the community. That software has been used for the first time in this election, starting with this reverse process, starting with the polling locations and then doing the boundaries.

That, combined with the increase in advance polls, I cannot promise there won't be any problems but we feel we are better equipped to avoid that kind of problem.

Mr. Scott Reid: It would be unrealistic to expect no problems. I'm asking that post-election you identify where you found them arising and then present to us your suggestions as to any solutions that might involve our role. For example, the law has to be tweaked in order to make them more accessible.

With regard to your last point, I'm very glad you raised that. I know my riding boundaries have been redrawn, but at one time we had a situation in which people in the riding were on the west shore of a lake where the boundary was a straight line following a county boundary. The shoreline of the lake was, of course, drawn by the hand of nature, and as a result caused a small number of homes in my riding to be very far from any polling station. On a one-off basis, our returning officer—to her credit—was able to set up a spot where they could vote outside of the riding boundaries at a poll box just for them.

I suspect that's the kind of thing you're referring to when you talk about the exceptional locations.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Yes. That kind of situation would have been caught, should have been caught, by the software that we're now using to allow us to avoid that.

This is a really good example of what running an election from Ottawa is about. If you look at the election surveys, 99% of voters were satisfied with their polling location and 97% were satisfied with their advance polling location. The surveys would tell us that there's no problem, but that's not how you run elections. As you know, there are local issues that do not come up in the magnitude of the surveys and overall data. They're real issues that need to be addressed.

In terms of returning officers and candidates being on the ground and signalling the issues to us, I think that's very helpful.

●(1145)

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a list here, so try to make your questions a reasonable length.

I have Ms. Sahota, Mr. Nater, Mr. Hardie, Mr. Cullen and Madam Lapointe.

Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you.

My first question is in terms of the security penetration testing that you referred to before. How much funding is going into preparing yourself? With these current threats in mind, what outside agencies or companies, if any, have you hired, or is it all being done mostly in-house? I don't mean CSIS and all those types of government agencies that you're working with. Are you working with any other companies that are helping you do this testing?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Typically, penetration testing is done by third party private organizations that are white-listed by CSE, so that we know we're working with the right people and not the wrong people.

Overall, our spending on security on an annual basis is around \$5 million.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Okay.

Has this increased a whole lot from previous election years?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It has, but sometimes it's hard to separate the increase on security from other things. I'll give you a couple of examples. When you do patches to software, you're not necessarily

doing that for security reasons, but it's really important for the security to do those patches.

Similarly, when we build the systems today we need to build them not because the old ones are not secure, but because they're obsolete. They need to be rebuilt. As we do that, we build them with security in mind, with the new technology and so forth.

Not every security improvement is a security expenditure. A lot of what we do improves security as a benefit. For example, we had to build a new data centre. That new data centre is much more secure. For that data centre, I can tell you that there are \$13 million over six years strictly for security devices. That does not count—and I'll be corrected if I'm wrong—the expenditures of the Communications Security Establishment for their device monitoring our systems.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: It's interesting. In the public safety committee we're currently doing a cybersecurity study. It's very eye-opening and it's very scary because of the gaps we currently have with all of our organizations—our government and our Canadian companies as well. I'm glad that this has been a big focus.

We're well aware of fake news being a growing phenomenon. I know you can't monitor everything that's out there. That would be almost impossible for you to do. I know social media companies are facing that same challenge. They have put a lot of money into trying to tackle the problem as well.

How about educating those who are consuming the information? Is there any money being put towards educating Canadians about this threat, about how to be more cognizant and mindful of what they're reading, and how to identify something that may come from an invalid source versus other sources, and sources outside of our country? What are you doing in terms of that?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It's a large problem and well beyond Elections Canada. I know that there are efforts elsewhere, both public sector and private sector efforts, but we have to do our part in that. There are a few things.

One is rapid response. I think Mr. Reid mentioned it. As I indicated, we're monitoring and we will be responding quickly. That's one aspect.

The other aspect that's very important for us in the coming months is to brand it. I talked about our pre-writ campaign, which is to brand Elections Canada as the trusted source of information. In the coming months, part of our strategy will be to make sure that Canadians understand that if they need information about the voting process they can check Elections Canada and that we're a trusted source. We're having a registry, which is our own repository of all our communications, all our tweets and all our posts. If something appears to be from Elections Canada, but you're not sure, media, citizens or parties can check and say that this was, in fact, a message by Elections Canada or not.

There's a range of things that we're doing. They do not tackle the full breadth of this disinformation problem that all societies are dealing with.

• (1150)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Have you been contemplating doing more perhaps?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I think there are different players that need to do their part. I can't myself take on to resolve media illiteracy as a whole, but I think media illiteracy, as it relates to understanding the electoral process, is part of my mandate. We're going to do some work in that area.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I was going to follow up a little bit on what Ms. Sahota touched on. I think I got a pretty good sense of where Elections Canada is at.

You mentioned five million and other things. I'm just going to express a concern. I think vulnerabilities within our systems is a significant concern. I'm glad that CSE is involved. I'm glad that you use outside contractors to identify some of those vulnerabilities, but I just hope that there's enough resources to prevent that. I think that's a major concern.

I just have one other question. You can comment on that perhaps after that.

It has to do with staffing up for the general election. I was recently on the Elections Canada website. In looking at the list of returning officers, I noticed that, in a very small number of cases, an assistant returning officer who was acting on behalf of the returning officer when they were unable to do so.

In those cases, is it the returning officer themselves that appoints their assistant to take over? Who actually appoints the assistant returning officer to that position to begin with? Does the returning officer hire their assistant returning officer? What is the process?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: There's a bit of a change in the rules with Bill C-76. Right now, we're at a point in time when it's fairly late in the game to start running competitions for filling returning officer positions. We want people to be in the driver's seat at this point. Where there sometimes is illness and a returning officer has to resign, the assistant returning officer that the RO has appointed will be stepping in as returning officer and we are assisting them.

For each region, there's a cluster of returning officers with field liaison officers. When there's a new player involved, they have the benefit of support from their colleagues in the neighbouring ridings and the field liaison officer.

You're right that the returning officer appoints the assistant returning officer. In Bill C-76, at our request—this is something that this committee, if I remember correctly, had approved unanimously when we did the recommendations—I now have a right of review. I need to be informed of the appointment of the assistant returning officer. If I have a concern with the appointment, if a person is hiring a friend who is not a competent person, for example, then I can have a say.

These are the new rules. I am satisfied that we have in place a very solid team of returning officers. We have a strong support network to assist them, even the new ones because there are some new ones.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you.

The Chair: I think my adjacent returning officer is about 1,000 kilometres away.

Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll beg the indulgence of the committee. I'm the newbie here, so I'm going to probably ask some questions that you have thoroughly canvassed. If you don't mind, I will ask them.

Regarding voter ID cards, voter fraud and non-Canadians who vote, what does the system look like? What are the safeguards?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It's a vast topic.

Mr. Ken Hardie: In 30 seconds or less.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The voter information card will be a piece of ID at the next election, as per Bill C-76. It's important to remember that it's not a stand-alone piece of ID. Nobody can vote with a voter information card without another piece of ID. You'll need a second piece of ID to support that. That will assist the voters—a small portion of voters—who have challenges. Also, as I mentioned in my remarks, we are making efforts to improve the accuracy of the register of electors, so that will improve the accuracy of the voter information cards.

The greater concern for me is non-citizens. We've noted for years that for all kinds of reasons—tax forms being checked—we estimate that there are a number of non-citizens in the register. That is quite material. It doesn't mean that these people will vote, but they may receive a voter information card. If they're in the register, they will. That's been a concern for Elections Canada for many years, and we've sought amendments to the law to make sure that we can have access to data on non-citizens that is held by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

That's been many years in coming. We now have that authority, and we are negotiating a transfer of data agreement, an MOU, with the department, to make sure that we can purge non-citizens from the register. That will be an important effort in the spring.

• (1155)

Mr. Ken Hardie: You mentioned that if somebody puts an item on Facebook that's false, misleading, etc., it has kind of an organic reach. If they boost it, however, does that then start to count as paid advertising?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's something we have to consider. There's a process for guidelines and interpretation, those we do in consultation with the parties. That is something we are going to be looking at with the parties, whether this amounts to, essentially, paid content. The challenge there of course is that the boost can come from all kinds of sources. It's not an easy issue to tackle, but we need to tackle this before the election.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I have two questions in one.

You're now back in the business of promoting voting and educating people about the process. What will that look like? If I as an individual MP want to spread the word in the riding, through a ten percenter or a householder, can I take the information that you provide on this issue and run it again unchanged?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: I would just caution you on one thing. In terms of polling places, for reasons of a flood the night before, a burst pipe, whatever the situation, poll sites are subject to last-minute changes. We're always concerned.

This could be just a week before. If you do door hangers with poll site information, you run a risk of sending your supporters to the wrong polling place if there's a change. We'd much prefer that your information—your door hangers or whatever you use—refer them to our website, where they will have up-to-date information to avoid good-faith errors that then can lead to rumours of disinformation. It gets out of control.

If you push your supporters to our website, that's the safest way.

Mr. Ken Hardie: In terms of the other things, how to register, what to watch for and so on—

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Absolutely. We have a website called Inspire Democracy. What we do at Inspire Democracy is equip intervenor groups, groups that work with new Canadians, young Canadians, and indigenous communities. We give them the tool kits to educate them about the electoral process. They are trusted partners for these communities. These are the people whom they serve on a regular basis. We don't know those communities, but they do. When they do events, they can download...

In the last election we had 50 partners. In this election we'll have 150. Even those that are not partners can take the content, the material we have, and use it. This is not information that's time-sensitive. It's not about the polling places. It's an explanation about the voting process. We'll have some information this time around on how to be a candidate. Parties can use that if they want to use that tool to assist them. We have some resources on our Inspire Democracy website for that purpose.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'll just step back a bit to the critical incident protocol group. Was Elections Canada consulted on its formation, design or activities?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: No, we were informed ahead of time, but we were not consulted on the formation. We have been working with the departments and agencies for a long time now to plan for the election, but that is an overlay of that. We were not consulted on that. It's a government initiative.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sure. We share that experience then, Mr. Perrault. We weren't consulted on it either. It just sort of happened, yet the mandate of that critical election incident public protocol is, could we agree, significant. It is significant to have that tabled together, be fed information from our spy agencies as to whether a critical incident has happened, or a political party has been hacked, and there has been enough traffic to show a foreign or domestic

attempt to influence our election, which is the bedrock of everything we do here.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: One of the things that we've heard in testimony at this committee and others is that when a hack takes place, it's often the case you don't get to learn about it until well after the fact. Has that been your understanding in looking at this issue?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That's exactly one of the challenges that we will face if something happens. The issue is not defined until later on. Disinformation being sent to voters about a polling location may be the first sign that a party database has been hacked. From the fact of this information being sent, you don't automatically jump to the conclusion that the database was hacked. In fact, it may be that this disinformation is an error. Is it a disinformation campaign? Is it errors? Was the database hacked? Was it hacked by foreign actors? It takes a lot of intervention to understand a situation.

• (1200)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. It seems to me then that one of the challenges we face with this whole conversation is that when we learn that, let's call it a crime, has been committed, or an attempt has been made to misdirect the voter intention, a government could have been sworn in, conducting itself for many months, passing budgets and declaring or not declaring wars. Then we find out that an incident took place. That is the scenario the Americans are dealing with right now.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Exactly.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. I would imagine that with the resources the Democrats and the Republicans have, which are more significant than any party's in Canada, they were unable and were not required to have certain protocols in place to protect them and their databases. We have the same situation in Canada.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Sorry, if I may, I would add that we at Elections Canada and the security establishments are engaging the political parties on this issue. This is something other countries did not have the benefit of.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No political party will be required to attain a certain level of security by Bill C-76 before the next election. You can consult with us, and the security intelligence community can consult with us, and advise us, but no party is required to do anything, other than stating a protocol on a website.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Nor are social media agencies required to do anything under Bill C-76, or under this new protocol. This was a question we put to the government. We said that when it came to a whole bunch of the rules that are being established, there were the musts and therefore and shalls, but when it came to social media, the government had a set of expectations and hopes that Facebook, Twitter and others would conduct themselves in a certain way.

Those of us in politics have all experienced a lie spreading around about us, and once it's out, the genie is out of the bottle. Last year, I had a terrible headline about me on a major news network, and it took us four hours of talking to the news network saying, "That's not what happened." The reporter admitted it, and then the headline was changed, but it didn't matter. They changed it, but it had already made its way around Twitter and social media, so much so that I spent the next five days trying to correct the false headline about what I had or hadn't done.

I'll take it to something that is in your purview: voting polls and voting stations. I remember an incident a number of years ago in which Jewish Canadian voters in a couple of Toronto ridings were contacted on the Sabbath, by people claiming to be with the federal Liberal Party. It didn't originate with the federal Liberal Party. It was somebody else doing it, trying to provoke anger in constituents in some ridings. They had somehow gotten access to the list of Jewish Canadian voters who were likely to vote Liberal.

One could imagine having access to that incredibly rich data, targeting particular Canadians with a particular message on voting stations, which we also saw: "Go here, not there." You know that when a voter goes to line up at a voting station, gets all the way to the front and Elections Canada says, "I'm sorry, you can't vote here. You are in the wrong place. Drive across town and vote where you are supposed to," many voters simply won't vote. It is a great tactic, or technique, for voter suppression. Is that fair to say about voters going to the wrong polling station?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: It's certainly been a proven tactic in many countries.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sure, okay, let's say that, "in many countries" if you send the voter to the wrong place, and they wait for a few hours, they're unlikely to vote again. If they target voters of a political party, send them to the wrong polling station, would you have any power under that scenario, or the commissioner, to investigate?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: If there's—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —disinformation.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Absolutely, and there have been, as you know, investigations and prosecutions, so there are powers after the fact.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, after the fact.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: The real important thing is pushing out and rapidly responding with the right information.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Again, I go back to my scenario about a bad story going viral. I'll take another party. If every New Democratic voter in Nanaimo is sent to the wrong polling station with disinformation, by the time it's identified and caught and investigated, voting day is over—

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Correct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —and you can't declare that result null and void because of that investigation.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: There are three aspects. One is prevention. Another one is resiliency. The third one is sanctions. Those sanctions are the least thing—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They're the least effective because it's after the fact.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Yes. Resiliency is the second thing. Resiliency is pushing out correct information—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: —and responding. The first thing is prevention. This is why on the privacy side parties have a requirement now to have a policy. Again, we will be engaging the parties on that. That requirement will be triggered shortly, and then they will have three months to have those policies. That should include measures to safeguard the data. That's where we are on this.

• (1205)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: This is my last point.

I think of a foreign entity that a current government has upset recently with advanced cyber communication and the ability to hack into systems. Let's just take China, for example. That said, not even doing it, but the threat of doing it, of saying, "We're going to contact every one of your voters and send them to the wrong polling station", without the proper privacy protections is a legitimate threat. Our powers, as Elections Canada or the commissioner, to investigate afterwards, are all after the fact.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: That is why we are so concerned about branding Elections Canada as the source of information on the voting process. For Canadians, it's great that all of you and other candidates push out information, but if they have any doubt, in fact, they should check with Elections Canada.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I love your hopes for the average elector, I really do, but I see the trends on where Canadians are getting their news from, and it's increasingly social media, and even though they have suspicions, they believe most of what they read on social media. If something looks like an Elections Canada post, as we've seen in the past, but now on steroids, saying that your voting station has been changed....

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's a crude example. That's not even in the major fake news and the lies and all the rest. I just don't know if we have the capacity to alter that effect.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: We are working with social media platforms—and we don't have the solution yet—so they would automatically refer Canadians on their platforms to our website.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'd love to see whatever protocol you're able to get them to commit to, because they don't commit to much, legally I mean. Sure, they say nice things.

Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Thank you.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Chair, for the extra time.

The Chair: For the last question, we'll go to Madam Lapointe.
[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thought I'd never get a chance to talk.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us today.

I want to come back to what you said earlier about student access to polling stations at colleges and universities. You mentioned 4,000 students and the fact that the number of sites will increase from 39 to 115. Did I understand that you will be sending information on the selected sites?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: We are in the process of finalizing that. It will be known in advance.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Right.

Will students at these institutions have the option to vote for a candidate in the riding where they're from or in the riding where they are?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Under the act, students, like people working in labour camps, must determine their usual place of residence. It is up to them to do it. Some students have left home and will never return, and they consider the riding where the university they attend is located to be their usual place of residence. However, many of them consider that they still live in their place of origin.

Voting on campuses is done by means of a special ballot, as is the case with labour camps. Voters first determine their place of ordinary residence and vote in that place of residence using a special ballot. It's a cumbersome mechanism. In the last election, it was lengthy. We have therefore greatly reduced the average voting time by redesigning the process. We will try to make the process more efficient for voters.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: In principle, students in the northern suburbs attending Collège Lionel-Groulx and Cégep de Saint-Jérôme or a university in Montreal will be able to decide where they really want to vote.

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: They must determine where their habitual residence is.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: In your opening statement, you mentioned the efforts that had been made with regard to workers, but also people living in CHSLDs, long-term care hospitals.

How will this situation be improved?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: This process is repeated at each election. These are places where, unfortunately, the turnover rate is high. People come in, people die. In long-term care centres, we conduct targeted reviews before the election to ensure that people are registered at the centre where they are located. We establish protocols for a mobile vote to take place. The returning officer visits these premises, and the ballot box is brought into the rooms of the voters.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: What about people who are severely physically disabled?

• (1210)

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: Often, these people don't have identification. So there is a voter information card. In the past, a

targeted review was done. The person was told that we were going to register them. We came back two weeks later, and asked them to prove that they did, indeed, live there. These people, who are bedridden, don't have any identification with an address on it.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I'm going to change the topic a bit. Earlier, several people talked about social media platforms. My colleague mentioned the ads and publications that were relaunched. On the topic of third parties, you said that you would inform those you knew, but that you did not yet know what would happen to the others. You say you provide a lot of information from Elections Canada so that people can recognize all its ads, but we don't yet know who the third parties are.

How are you going to do that?

Mr. Stéphane Perrault: We don't really have the means. First, I would like to point out that third parties can be 27 million Canadians. They are also an infinite number of groups of Canadians. These groups may already be created, created before the election or created during the election. Of course, in many cases, we cannot reach groups that do not yet exist. However, we may publish the information on our website. People are now used to using websites. They try to be visible and as clear as possible. It must be said that the rules have become extremely complex for them. Our role is to try to simplify this and alert people. For those we do not know, the vast majority of them, we will have to deal with them when they come to us.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you, Mr. Perrault.

[English]

The Chair: Actually, that was the second-last intervention.

Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I'll let my intervention go. It was actually a comment on Nathan.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Chair, we're done here. That's it. Bang the gavel.

Mr. Scott Reid: I just want to thank our guests. I always appreciate the professionalism of the CEO.

The Chair: We all agree with that. That's unanimous.

Let's see if they pass muster.

Shall vote 1b under the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in supplementary estimates (B) carry?

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Vote 1b—Program Expenditures.....\$1,282,885

(Vote 1b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall vote 1 under the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the interim estimates carry?

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$9,804,477

(Vote 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Great. Again, thank you very much.

We're going to suspend to go in camera, so anyone who's not supposed to be here, please leave. *[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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