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# Board of Internal Economy

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## Board of Internal Economy

Thursday, March 25, 2021

• (1105)

[English]

**Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons):** We're going to start the agenda, item number one, the minutes from the previous meeting—I just want to check—from February 25, 2021.

Are they okay?

We are in order—I see heads nodding—so we will move on.

[Translation]

Let's proceed with item 2 on the agenda, business arising from the previous meeting. For your information, we are looking at resource utilisation for parliamentary events, audio headsets for virtual Parliament, and technical observations on hybrid proceedings and information concerning committee witnesses.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Whip of the Bloc Québécois):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I would like to thank those who worked on the dashboard requested at the last meeting. I read it carefully. I would like to thank Mr. Janse's team, who probably worked with the IT team to compile the data. The dashboard shows that 90% of the witnesses now participate in technical tests, and this has certainly had a positive impact on the work of the committees. There are far fewer technical difficulties and interpretation issues. So it's satisfying and reassuring to see that, when we make an effort to put a solution in place, it pays off. So I think it was a good decision to ask for technical tests, and we see that it is a success.

I'd like to ask a quick question, for personal interest, regarding the headset purchases. A lot of headsets were purchased initially and given to members and staff. However, how many witnesses were there, and how many of them received headsets?

The dashboard says that headsets cannot always be delivered on time because witnesses are often called at the last minute. Perhaps I missed it when I looked at the tables, but I would like to know how many headsets were purchased and how many reached the witnesses on time.

Is that figure available?

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** We will ask. I don't know who has that information.

• (1110)

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, Digital Services and Real Property, House of Commons):** I can give the answer, Mr. Speaker.

We sent out 834 headsets and there were a total of 2,120 witnesses.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Can you tell me the percentage?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Let me do the math quickly.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** You say 844—

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** It's 834, which is almost 40%, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** So, 40% of the witnesses received headsets.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** That's right, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** So, 40% of the witnesses received their headsets on time. However, the technical tests have helped us understand that the key is not only the headset, but especially the quality of the microphone. This means that some witnesses who did not receive headsets are encouraged to use their personal microphones to have better sound for the interpreters.

Is that correct?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** That is correct, Mrs. DeBellefeuille. The technical tests enable us to check whether the microphones the witnesses will use are good enough for them to participate in our meetings. That's what the technical tests allow us to do. We can identify those issues, and if we do the technical tests early in the day, we can notify the witnesses if their microphones do not meet our standards. For example, Apple AirPods are not suitable. We are not saying the microphone is not good, but Bluetooth technology is less recommended for our meetings because we want to protect our interpreters.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Are there any comments on the second item?

[English]

Mr. Richards, do you have a comment on item number two?

**Mr. Blake Richards (Chief Opposition Whip):** There are two things. I have a follow-up to some of Madame DeBellefeuille's questions.

In regard to some of the incidents you had with the interpreters with injuries and whatnot, I notice that 65 incidents were reported in the first six months and there have only been 16 in the last six months.

Has that decline continued? Has the number plateaued? What do we attribute that to? Is it just better use of the headsets?

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** I believe that's for Monsieur Aubé.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Basically, Mr. Richards, we did some in the fall—in September and then October. We started this process in July. We replaced some of the audio consoles in the interpretation booths to ensure that the interpreters had better protection. The new consoles are meeting higher standards for hearing protection. This is the major factor in why we have seen the number of incidents go down. I would say that the number of incidents is not going up. The number of incidents has really gone down and are staying down, sir.

We're also working on many other factors, as Madame DeBellefeuille talked about. We're ensuring that we have the proper microphones. We're working with the Translation Bureau to do more testing and to validate if we need to increase the norm as it relates to microphones.

We're doing many things, sir, to ensure that the quality is there in the audio chain, from the user participating in Zoom right up to our interpreter's booth and that health and safety is respected for the interpreters.

**Mr. Eric Janse (Clerk Assistant, Committees and Legislative Services Directorate, House of Commons):** Could I add one thing? I'm sorry, Mr. Richards. I have one quick point.

You should also bear in mind that over the past various months, the number of meetings and events has increased. While we see a decrease in injuries—which we hope will continue—we have to keep in mind that it was in parallel with an increase in the number of meetings and activities.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** On a percentage basis, it's an even better decrease. That's good news.

The other thing I wanted to touch on is the resources for committee meetings and other items. In that area, you've expressed some concerns about arriving at a point where we may get to a bit of a breaking point, for lack of a better way of putting it, in use of resources. I'm really concerned about that. I wanted to probe a little bit about it.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and probably even more so after prorogation, we've seen a bit of a trend toward longer meetings and ones that are running more than 15 minutes, or even longer, beyond the projected time they would end.

I'm wondering if you've done any analysis of the reasons behind that increase or trend toward longer meetings. We've noticed a lot of Liberal filibusters at committee, for example. Have you tracked that and done an analysis on how much of that is being driven by

the Liberal filibusters that are happening at committees to try to delay business?

If those filibusters were to end, what kind of a difference would that make to resource allocations and making this a little bit more manageable?

• (1115)

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** We'll go to you on that, Mr. Janse.

**Mr. Eric Janse:** I'm a bit reluctant to comment on the issue of filibusters, but what I can mention, Mr. Richards, is that before the introduction of the voting app, votes in the House took a considerable amount of time and would delay committee meetings. By the time people went from voting to logging on to their committee meeting, it took a bit of time, delayed the start of committees and resulted in committees going longer. In general, just the time it takes to log in is slowing things down and accounts for why a lot of meetings are going a bit beyond time. There's the time to log the witnesses in as well.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I appreciate that.

I can see how it might appear that I'm trying to get partisan here. That's not the case. A lot of filibustering is taking place. My concern is that when that happens... You're telling us that resources are sort of at a breaking point. I'm trying to figure out how much of that is actually a result of the filibusters and how much of that is just an issue of not being able to keep pace with the committees. If it's not being able to keep pace, it's a different issue than if it were as a result of filibusters, which are avoidable and preventable.

I'm trying to get a sense of this. I'm hearing that maybe you haven't analyzed how much of it is actually due to filibusters and how much of it is due to the sheer volume of meetings. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Mr. Eric Janse:** No.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Is that something that you, maybe, would analyze? I would suggest that it might be a good idea to analyze that because, obviously, it's a different... We're looking at a different problem if it's literally just that we can't keep up with the number of meetings—because we have to ensure that we can do that—versus if it's an issue of filibusters. That's a little less inside your control. That's why I suggest it.

**Mr. Eric Janse:** It's a fair point. We can do a bit of an analysis of that and come back with some information for the next board meeting—or before.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Great. That would be appreciated. Thank you.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Our next person on the schedule is Mr. Julian, followed by Mr. Holland.

However, before I go to Mr. Julian, Mr. Richards mentioned the microphone being...the quality and the health of our interpreters. I just want to remind all of the people who are on today that it's best if the arm is about halfway between your nose and your upper lip so that we can avoid the popping sound. That will take into consideration the health of our interpreters, whom we care about so much.

Monsieur Julian.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the New Democratic Party):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, could I interject before we move on?

To be clear, they've asked me to put it closer to my mouth.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** You're doing fine, Mr. Richards. Actually, I should say that that's standard, but depending on where your breath goes, you could hold it lower between your lower lip and your chin. These are things that I observe while I'm sitting in the chair and watching you guys speak. Now you know what I do with my time.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** No, no, I appreciate that.

I had a phone call. They asked me to put it closer, so I moved it based on that. I just wanted to make sure that I hadn't moved it to the wrong place.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** No, the big concern is when it's directly in front of your mouth. When your breath comes out, it pops on it, and it's very difficult on the interpreters' ears.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Okay. I'll try to adjust it just a little bit.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** No, you were fine. Don't worry about it. I just notice it being there for some.

Anyways, Mr. Julian, you have a comment.

[*Translation*]

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

Since we want to discuss a lot of topics today, I will start immediately.

First, I want to mention that I am very pleased with the progress we have made and especially with the fact that we have more and more equipment that reduces the injury rate of interpreters. Interpreters do a lot of hard work and reducing the number of injuries helps them tremendously.

Second, I would like to ask Mr. Aubé a question. While we are pleased with the progress, there are still some problems. What will it take for us to reduce the incidents affecting our interpreters to zero?

I have experience working in factories where you go days, weeks or months without an injury. It's part of the workers' health and safety program.

What do we need to do to reduce to zero the incidents that cause problems and injuries to our interpreters, who are doing an outstanding job?

• (1120)

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Mr. Julian, thank you for the question.

First, we have worked very hard to address the major problem of acoustic bursts. We did so by investing in consoles for the interpreters.

Now our job is to make sure that the chain from the participants in the meeting to the interpreters is good. As you saw in January and February, the first thing we need to do is the technical tests. Before people participate in the meeting, we need to have the opportunity to check that the microphone is positioned correctly, that the environment in which the person is going to participate is good, and that their connectivity is good. These three major factors affect the quality of the sound and, consequently, could cause problems for the interpreters. That's what we are working on.

Finally, we are examining the equipment in the committee rooms, in the House of Commons on an ongoing basis. If we are able to increase the quality by making modifications or changes to the configuration, we will do so.

For example, in the last three weeks, we have conducted some tests with the Translation Bureau, because we noticed that, in committee, the sound quality was slightly lower than in the House. We are in the process of checking whether this is the case through extensive tests to compare the sound from those participating on Zoom to the committee room and the interpretation booth. We have put a lot of effort into this. In addition, we have a number of people on site. As you can see, a lot of people are present in the committee rooms to make sure that we are able to address any issues that may arise with our interpreters. So those are the different things that we're looking at to improve the situation.

In closing, we are in the process of implementing an ongoing improvement program. Every week, we look at the statistics and assess what has caused difficulties. We try to fix those problems so that they don't happen again the next week.

[*English*]

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Now we will go to Mr. Holland.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mark Holland (Chief Government Whip):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First, let me thank you and the entire team for your efforts. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of the interpretation, but also in the health of our interpreters. Thank you very much for your efforts.

[*English*]

I have just a quick note. If we're going to talk on the issue of resources, then I really do want to raise this point. It is the opposition's right, of course, to troll and look for anything it might find useful for itself. Hopefully its principle purpose in that is what's useful for the country. It's the government's right to disagree with what it is trying to bring forward and say that is not what is of most importance to the nation right now or for the advantage of Parliament.

I do think it's a good opportunity to talk about the use of Standing Order 106(4). I do think it's a good time to talk about all of the creation of new committees and work that is being placed on interpreters and to ask who is creating that work. Who is demanding all of these additional resources and all of the additional time that is being taken? Of course, that is a rhetorical question. I would never actually ask that of House administration because that would be an incredibly partisan thing to do and this is not supposed to be a partisan environment.

I do think it is worthwhile for us, as we think about the people who work with us and who do an incredible job of supporting us as we pursue our individual agendas and what we are trying to take care of, to think about the work that they have to do and how much time they have to spend to do it.

As the opposition creates new committee meetings under Standing Order 106(4) and decides to continue to press issues that are not being talked about in the national dialogue and demands that Parliament spend all of its time and energy on those issues, perhaps the opposition members could give some time and consideration for all of the people they are putting out along the way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1125)

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Julian.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I have said this before at the Board of Internal Economy. I believe firmly that we have to put our partisan hats aside at the Board of Internal Economy. I certainly prefer that we not have these kinds of debates. I don't think they are appropriate for the board where it is strictly non-partisan and where we put aside whatever party, whether we represent the government or the opposition. This is not the place nor the role for the BOIE. I feel uncomfortable with a couple of the comments that have come up so far today.

I just wanted to raise that.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Okay, how about we leave it at that?

Everybody has made their comments.

[*Translation*]

Before moving on to the next item on the agenda, I propose, with the agreement of the members, to distribute the briefing documents on the committee proceedings in the item on business arising from the previous meeting of the Liaison Committee.

[*English*]

Is everybody is okay? Good.

[*Translation*]

We will continue with item 3.

[*English*]

Number 3 is the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors, CCOLA, and the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committee, CCPAC, 2022 conference.

Our presenter is Ms. Sgro, and we have Mrs. Block as well.

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Chair, Liaison Committee, House of Commons):** Thank you very much.

I believe Mrs. Block was going to go first in the presentation, but since you have called me, I will move on—

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** I didn't want to mess up your order here. I'm just reading what I have before me. I read half of it, anyway. I'm sorry about the second half. You two can decide who wants to go first.

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro:** Good morning, members of the board.

I want to thank Mrs. Block, who is going to do a presentation in detail on the conference for which we are seeking your approval today. Mrs. Block gave a presentation to the subcommittee on committee budgets—SBLI—on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, on March 12. Her request was approved unanimously by the members of the subcommittee. I now present the request, of course, to the board for approval, as is the process.

The budget before you is based on the participation of 110 delegates and 25 accompanying persons. The conference will take place basically over two days, from Sunday afternoon until Tuesday afternoon when folks would depart.

The cost of the conference is shared between CCPAC and CCOLA in an approximate sixty five-thirty five split, depending on the participation of each group, with CCPAC absorbing the greater percentage because there are more CCPAC members participating than the CCOLA members. That also means that the revenues generated by the conference fees are split in the same way.

You'll see in the budget document that the global cost is \$97,785. The PACP's share of that cost is \$27,000 once the conference fees are calculated.

The committee is asking that a maximum of \$42,000, including anticipated revenues for registration fees, in temporary funding be provided for the organization of the conference in 2022.

I believe Mrs. Block wanted to now speak to the issue, as well.

• (1130)

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, House of Commons):** Thank you very much, Ms. Sgro.

Good morning, members of the board. I am pleased to join you today.

As Ms. Sgro has outlined, today we are seeking approval and funding to host the 2022 conference of the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors and Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees. I know you have received a submission in detail, so I just hope to give the broader context.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, of which I am the chair, is a member of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees. This council and the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors host an annual meeting to discuss best practices and provide information sessions on issues related to the study of public accounts.

The CCPAC was first created in 1978 and has held joint meetings almost every year since 1979, with each jurisdiction taking its turn to host. The federal committee has never hosted this event.

Discussions have been ongoing since 2017 to have the federal committee host the meeting in November 2020. The PACP adopted a motion to host the conference in 2022, once the appropriate budget had been prepared and adopted and the necessary permission from the host had been received.

I'll just repeat that first part. Discussions have been ongoing since 2017 to have the federal government host the meeting, and in November that is when the PACP adopted a motion to do so in 2022.

I would simply also state that the chair at that time, in 2017 up until 2019, was Mr. Sorenson. He was a firm supporter of the committee participating in these conferences and of the federal committee taking its turn to host in Ottawa.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Do we have any questions from the board? Is everyone in agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Very good. We'll move on to item 4.

[Translation]

Item 4 on the agenda is the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States.

Mr. Janse has the floor.

**Mr. Eric Janse:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will be brief. Whenever a special committee is created, the funding comes directly from the Board of Internal Economy, not from the funding for all standing committees.

[English]

Members have before them a submission that seeks a start-up budget for the recently created Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, with a recommendation that the funds required for this committee, nonetheless, come from the global envelope for standing committees.

[Translation]

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Are there any questions?

[English]

Is everything clear? Are we okay with the recommendation? Is everybody in accordance with it?

Okay.

[Translation]

We will continue with item 5.

[English]

It's the Joint Interparliamentary Council.

[Translation]

This is the Parlement francophone des jeunes of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, whose 47th annual session will be held in Montreal, Quebec, from July 7 to 12, 2022.

Our speaker today is Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Members of Parliament, as chair of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), I would like to thank you for receiving our request to add the Parlement francophone des jeunes to the annual session of the APF scheduled for July 2022 in Montreal.

The explanations for holding the event and the reasons for this additional request are detailed in the note that accompanied the letter sent to you on February 12. We are all interested in educating young people about parliamentary action, and approval of this request would support that goal. Finally, we will be pleased to invite you, when the time comes, to participate in this major francophone event, so that you can see for yourselves the vitality of the Canadian francophonie.

I will be pleased to answer your questions.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (House Leader of the Official Opposition):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Drouin. I am pleased to speak to you.

Clearly, we agree on that, but I wanted to know if your game plan calls for the event to be held in person or in another form.

• (1135)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** We are currently planning an in-person event. Mr. LeBlanc will be able to give you more details, but I know that the contracts include force majeure clauses in case the meeting cannot be held in Montreal in 2022.

**Mr. Jeremy LeBlanc (Principal Clerk, Chamber Business and Parliamentary Publications):** Yes, Mr. Deltell, I see what you are getting at in terms of the possibility of holding the meeting in a hybrid or virtual format. It will be up to the International Executive Committee of the APF to make the decision. However, we are ready and we have begun negotiations on how to adapt if the event is held in hybrid or virtual form.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Okay.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Are we in agreement on the recommendation?

Everyone agrees, that's great. We'll continue with item 6.

[English]

Number six is the distribution of certain mailings to members' constituents living outside Canada.

The presenters today are Ms. Kletke and Ms. Allard.

Please begin.

[Translation]

**Ms. Rebekah Kletke (Chief Operations Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to present a submission seeking approval from the Board of Internal Economy to amend certain regulations and policies. As a result of a request from a member of Parliament, the House Administration has reviewed the Board's policies regarding the distribution of householders and mailings to constituents residing outside Canada. The Members By-Law currently provides that householder and constituency mailings may be distributed only within the member's constituency.

[English]

The restriction of householders and constituency mail to within the constituency of the member means that members' constituents living outside of Canada do not receive these mailings. Constituents who reside outside of Canada and are registered to vote with Elections Canada are recorded in the international register of electors, which is provided to members annually by the Chief Electoral Officer. After the general election held in October 2019, there were 167,392 electors in the international register of electors.

In recognition of the need for members to communicate with all of their constituents, including Canadian Forces and other Canadians living outside of Canada, the House administration is proposing updates to the board's policies on householders and constituency mail.

First, the House administration proposes that the policy regarding householders be changed to allow members to send householders as addressed mail to their constituents living outside of Canada whose information is included in the international register of electors provided by the Chief Electoral Officer. Costs for additional copies of householders would continue to be charged to the members' office budget, and envelope costs and costs for international postage would also be charged to the MOB.

Second, the House administration proposes that the policy regarding constituency mail be changed to allow members to send a portion of their original constituency mail allocation as addressed mail to their constituents living outside of Canada, whose information is included in the the international register of electors. Envelope costs and international postage for constituency mail sent to constituents living outside of Canada would be charged to the MOB.

[Translation]

These recommendations, if approved, will allow members to use householder and constituency mailings to communicate with all their constituents, including those living outside of Canada.

This concludes my presentation. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[English]

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** For questions and comments, we'll start off with Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Thanks for the presentation, and I appreciate the attention this has received. I think an important matter was raised. I'll ask a question and make a suggestion at the same time.

I'm wondering if this fully captures the aspect of military personnel and their dependants. I assume that in your consideration this would include military personnel outside of Canada. That's a question. But what about those within Canada who would be stationed on a base outside of the constituency where they are electors? I'm wondering if this captures them. It doesn't seem that it would.

I have a suggestion to make. In points one and two you talked about adding addressed mail, the householder or constituency mailings for constituents living outside Canada. That's how you've termed it. I wonder if we could make it "constituents living outside of the electoral district" or something like that, because although it would capture, I assume, military members and their dependants who are stationed outside of Canada, I'm not certain that it would capture those posted on a base within Canada who are electors elsewhere. I want to make sure they are captured as well. I think it's important to ensure that all of our military personnel are receiving the same opportunity to get communications from their MPs.

Would the suggestion I've made capture all of those people, or do you believe you've already done so?

• (1140)

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Monsieur Patrice will respond to that question.

**Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Richards.

You're totally right. The proposal as presented right now is about Canadians living abroad, but it doesn't capture constituents who may live outside a riding. To reach those types of constituents, they would need to modify it. If it's the wish of the board, we could definitely make that change to the submission to capture Canadians outside of a riding who are registered abroad and those within Canada.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Do you think the suggestion I'm making would capture all of them, or do you have another suggestion?

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** We would look at the wording to make sure it captures what you addressed, but there are also other constituents. For example, it could be students who are registered in a riding but studying, for example, in another...

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Yes, good point. I'd like to see us capture that. I'll make that suggestion. If other members are willing to consider that, I think it's important to include those people as well.



I have something else, but I think what I'm going to do is lower my hand, Mr. Speaker, and raise it again so that we can deal with this particular aspect. I have a question that relates to printing and mailing, but I think it's better that we have this discussion first. I will raise my hand to bring that up afterwards.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Okay.

We'll now go to Madame DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the proposal, but I cannot give my support to my colleague Mr. Richards at this time. I don't have the information for a comprehensive analysis. For the time being, I am in favour of adopting the submission before us and reflecting on this proposal at the next meeting.

I have other questions, but perhaps they are not appropriate for this meeting. I would like to understand the full implications of this proposal before we add it. I'm not opposed to it, but I would like to have more analyses and recommendations from the House Administration before deciding on this issue.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Thank you.

We will now continue with Ms. Petitpas Taylor. After that, it will be Mr. Richards' turn.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Deputy Government Whip):** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

In the same vein as the previous speaker, I wasn't planning to speak to this, but I'm wondering how we would capture students within our ridings who are in other areas, or military personnel who perhaps are not living at home and are at another base.

With respect to the proposal that's been brought forward, there's a registry in place, an international registry. How would we be able to capture people who are living outside of their riding if they're not registered in a specific area? I'm just looking for a bit of clarification on that.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Monsieur Patrice will answer that.

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** It would be the information, as I understand.... We're not providing those lists, but it would be based on the lists that MPs receive pursuant to the Canada Elections Act. We could look further into what information they provide you in the lists. It's clear that for people abroad you're getting a mailing address, but it could be the same thing in relation to other constituents. We would need to have a better understanding of the list that is provided to MPs on a confidential basis.

• (1145)

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Very good.

Now we'll go back to Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** As long as we've addressed anyone else who wants to comment on this particular suggestion, I would like to move on to another topic. It appears that's the case.

I'll make one last comment on this. I'm hearing the concerns that were raised about ensuring that there is a way to capture those people. I think there would be, because if I understand the proposal correctly, it would be on us to address them based on the information we have available to us from electors.

If it's the feeling among members that we approve this, we can ask them to come back with a suggestion on how to deal with people within Canada. As long as there's a commitment that they can find a way to capture those people in a satisfactory way, we will be seeking to approve it. If we're satisfied with this, I would be comfortable doing it that way, because I think it's important that we find a way to do this. As long as we make a commitment that we're.... As long as they can come back with a way to show us that this can be captured in a reasonable way, we would be seeking to move forward. I'd be comfortable with that approach.

There is another issue I want to raise. I can't remember which meeting it was, but at a previous meeting I had raised the topic of service standards with printing and mailing services. I know that some suggestions were going to be brought back to us on how those could be improved. In the last little while, some additional concerns have been raised to me by members of my caucus about some of the delays and things like that, so obviously we still have work to do there.

I'm wondering what the status of that is and when we can expect to see something come forward to us. Is there any update you can provide to us on the work being done to improve those standards? Can you bring something back to the board with suggestions on that?

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Ms. Kletke, do you want to answer that?

**Ms. Rebekah Kletke:** Sure.

We are planned to come back. We're on the forward agenda for the May board meeting, with the further analysis that's been done. That follows the submission we brought to the last board meeting. That's when we're planning to come back.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Okay, are there any other questions or comments?

Just to be clear, we'll be coming back with a report. In the meantime, we have a list of recommendations.

Is everyone okay with the recommendations that are being suggested? I see everybody nodding.

[*Translation*]

We will now move to item 7 on the agenda, which is the modernization of election-related policies.

The presenters are Mr. Paquette, Mr. Aubé, Ms. Laframboise, Mr. Dufresne and Ms. Kletke.

I'll let you speak to your submission.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Daniel Paquette (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am here today to seek the Board of Internal Economy's approval to update and harmonize certain policies in the Members' Allowances and Services Manual and the Members By-law in relation to the dissolution and the post-election or transition period.

Following the last general election and in light of the challenges raised by members of Parliament and House officers, as well as issues raised by others and heard during consultations, the administration noted opportunities to update certain Board policies. I will provide an overview of some of the recommendations that are in the submission.

To begin with, the current post-election travel policy does not allow eligible employees of members of Parliament to travel between the constituency and Ottawa following a general election to assist the members of Parliament in closing their files and vacating their offices. In order to properly support members of Parliament, we recommend that eligible incumbent employees be provided with the same post-election travel allowances as outgoing members between the constituency and Ottawa.

• (1150)

[English]

Next are two closely related items pertaining to access to the parliamentary precinct network and the purchase of cellphones. Under current policy, members who are not seeking re-election have access to the parliamentary precinct until the day before the general election, and members who are not re-elected have access to the network for 21 days after the election.

These former members must also return their telecommunication equipment such as their cellphones. The current time frames do not allow enough time for former members to complete the administrative tasks and to settle the accounts with the House.

Extending the duration of access to the network would better serve members in settling their accounts. The administration here is recommending that external access to the parliamentary precinct network be increased to 90 days following the election for members who are not seeking re-election or who are not re-elected. They would retain one House-managed portable device during that period to facilitate the process. This would also align with the period that members have to settle their financial accounts.

As for cellphones, former members have expressed an interest in purchasing their devices to help ensure a certain continuity at a time when they are experiencing many changes. It is our proposal that, following an election, these members be allowed to purchase their cellphones for personal use at a fair market value.

Other recommendations relate to the mandatory clauses in constituency office leases. This proposal builds on revised assignment clauses approved by the board in 2015 where the leases of former members are assigned to the House for the 120 day period following an election. The administration noticed opportunities for further improvements, which would help facilitate a smooth transition between former and newly elected members. These revised clauses

would be included in new constituency office leases or the extension of existing leases after the next general election.

Also, with respect to transition support, the administration is recommending adjustments to better align the policies and by-laws in order to ensure that former members can effectively use these various transition supports.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my presentation. We are here to answer any questions that board members may have.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** I believe Mr. Julian has a question.

Monsieur Julian.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to ask any questions, but I do want to make a comment.

I would like to say that I support the recommendations that have been provided. I think it is extremely important to have a reasonable transition period. We know full well how difficult it is to go through an election period and then to not have the resources for everyone, the outgoing employees and the members, for the ensuing transition. That is a problem. So I think this approach makes sense because it improves that transition.

[English]

I would also say, Mr. Chair, that I think a more appropriate transition is also good for Canadians. We have a situation where MPs come out of an election campaign. If we're talking about a defeated member of Parliament, it's important that there be some transition with the new member of Parliament, even if they are from a different party.

Putting in place these measures, I think, just makes sense for their constituents as well. We need to have a little more of a framework and support and order around the transition that comes out of the chaos of an election campaign, so I fully support these measures.

[Translation]

Thank you.

**Hon. Anthony Rota:** Are there any other questions or comments?

[English]

Are we okay with the recommendations that have been put forward?

[Translation]

Everyone is in agreement. That's great.

We will now take a short break for a few minutes and then continue in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]







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