



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 018**

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Thursday, April 28, 2022

---

Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, April 28, 2022

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone.

I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee is meeting today to study the main estimates 2022-23 for the House of Commons and parliamentary services, during the first hour of the meeting. To this end, representatives from the House Administration and the Parliamentary Protective Service, or PPS, are attending the meeting.

We will then begin our study on the operational security of the Parliamentary Precinct. We will continue with the representatives of the House and the PPS. This part of the meeting will be held in camera.

So some of the House employees are here to talk to us about the main estimates.

[*English*]

We have with us Deputy Speaker Chris d'Entremont; Clerk of the House of Commons Charles Robert; deputy clerk, administration, Michel Patrice; and chief financial officer Paul St George.

With that, I welcome everyone present.

We'll go over to you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (Deputy Speaker, House of Commons):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of the committee. It's my pleasure to be here today on behalf of Speaker Rota.

I did speak to Anthony yesterday, and he is doing well. He thanks everyone, of course, for your kind wishes. I know that lots of people gave him a call, and he really appreciates that. He remains very involved in the office as he rebuilds his stamina.

These are very much his opening remarks that I will deliver today, but I'm going to give you a wink and hope that on Monday he will be in the office and maybe will start some work in the House of Commons on Tuesday, fingers crossed.

[*Translation*]

The past two years have been challenging in ways we could never have imagined. Nevertheless, the members of Parliament, their

staff, and the employees of the House Administration have adapted to the current reality. Despite the pandemic—or maybe because of it—the House of Commons has been particularly creative in leveraging technology to support the work of Parliament.

Over the past several years, the administration has been investing in technology infrastructure. These investments enabled parliamentarians and staff to connect securely to the House of Commons network and to one another. In this way, they were able to keep in touch.

[*English*]

Today, I'll be presenting the main estimates for the 2022-23 fiscal year for the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Protective Service.

I know they've already been introduced, but quickly, with me here today are Charles Robert, Clerk of the House of Commons; Michel Patrice, deputy clerk, administration; and Paul St George, chief financial officer.

On my left are Superintendent Larry Brookson, interim director of the Parliamentary Protective Service; Éric Savard, chief financial officer; and Sonia Vani, chief of staff.

I will begin by outlining key elements of the 2022-23 main estimates for the House of Commons, tabled on March 1, 2022.

The main estimates total \$563 million, which represents a net increase of \$19.3 million compared to the 2021-22 main estimates.

The 2022-23 main estimates were reviewed and approved by the Board of Internal Economy at its meeting on December 16, 2021.

I will present the main estimates for the House of Commons according to five major themes corresponding to the handout that you have received. The financial impact associated with each theme represents the year-over-year changes from the 2021-22 main estimates.

To start, funding in the amount of \$13.8 million for cost-of-living increases covers requirements for members' and House officers' budgets and the House administration, as well as the statutory increase to the members' sessional allowances and additional salaries.

The annual budget adjustments for members and House officers related to cost-of-living increases are based on the consumer price index and are essential to the exercise of their parliamentary functions.

Turning to major investments, we see a net decrease of \$1 million.

The sunseting of the funds included in the 2021-22 main estimates to account for one-time costs related to security enhancements for members resulted in a decrease of \$4.2 million in the 2022-23 main estimates.

Another area of focus for major investments that this committee has seen in the past is support for information technology systems and assets transferred to the House of Commons within the context of the long-term vision and plan. The additional funding provided for this support in the 2022-23 main estimates is \$2.3 million.

Other major investments include support for increased committee activities—\$489,000—and committee operations—\$322,000.

Moving now to the \$3.6-million increase for other adjustments for members and House officers, this includes the funding required for the House of Commons' contributions to members' pension plans, up \$3.6 million, as determined by the Treasury Board, and an increase of \$38,000 for House officers' office budgets due to the new party representation in the House following the 2021 general election.

Let us now turn to parliamentary diplomacy.

The funds earmarked for conferences, associations and assemblies in the 2022-23 main estimates total \$768,000.

[*Translation*]

The 2022–23 main estimates had identified funding for the 47th Annual Session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, scheduled to be held in Quebec in July 2022, but the assembly has been cancelled due to the pandemic. It is anticipated that the sum originally intended for this event will serve to reduce the funding requested in the main estimates.

The 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, which has been postponed for another year, from August 2021 to August 2022, remains in these main estimates.

• (1155)

Looking ahead to 2023–24, Canada is set to host the 31st Annual Session of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, in July 2023.

[*English*]

Finally, the main estimates provide for a total of \$2.2 million for adjustments to the contributions for the House of Commons' employee benefit plans.

I will now present the 2022-23 main estimates for the Parliamentary Protective Service. For the 2022-23 fiscal year, the service requests a main estimate budget of \$100.7 million. This represents an

increase of \$9.8 million, or 10.9% over the 2021-22 main estimates budget.

Before outlining the justification for this increase, it is worth noting the period of financial stability that the service achieved for the past three fiscal years, as the budget was maintained at approximately \$91 million, with the budgetary variance averaging -0.4%. The service's ongoing commitments to financial stewardship is further illustrated by the voluntary budget reduction of 2% applied to the previous main estimates.

[*Translation*]

Currently, the service is in its seventh year of protecting the Parliament of Canada, its parliamentarians, employees and visitors.

While the focus was almost exclusively on tactical priorities in the early years of the service's existence, it now operates as a strategic, intelligence-led agency. As it grows, it is increasingly focused on the welfare of its employees.

In fact, the 2021-24 strategic plan highlights two organizational priorities that underscore this maturity: delivering operational excellence and high performance to the parliamentary community and ensuring the overall health and well-being of its employees.

This approach recognizes the interdependence of the following two priorities: a workplace where all employees are physically and psychologically safe, coupled with a sense of belonging, which is essential to effectively deliver on the protection mandate.

[*English*]

The requested \$9.8 million increase will be used to mature the organization, meet financial obligations and address the ever-evolving threat environment. These are two main categories associated with the request.

In the first category are expenses linked to inflationary costs, legislative requirements and economic increases, which together account for roughly 70% of the ask as follows. Approximately 50% is associated with ongoing economic increases resulting from cost-of-living adjustments through collective bargaining mandates. An additional 8% provides the service with the necessary capacity to meet legislative requirements in areas such as occupational health and safety, diversity and belonging, and hazard identification and risk assessment. A further 12% is required to cover inflationary increases associated with various goods and services. The remaining 30% of this increase includes 20% to be allocated to threat mitigation and protective mandate initiatives to ensure that the service continues to meet its current and future threats effectively, and 10% to be invested in resources required to adequately support the service's operational sector.

As some of you may recall, 2018 marked an important milestone in the service's history. An initiative was then launched to transition RCMP resources off the Hill. This transition was completed in October 2020, as RCMP frontline resources were completely demobilized. Today, the Parliamentary Protective Service assumes full responsibility of precinct security. As the service matures, it continues to establish, integrate and optimize systems to ensure increased operational readiness and effective response. It is making progress on important multi-year projects, such as the implementation of an enterprise resource planning system and a computer-automated dispatch system.

Having assumed full control of the precinct's security, with major systems coming online, and with its commitment to people-driven excellence, the Parliamentary Protective Service is better positioned than ever before to deliver on its protective mandate in an ever-evolving threat environment.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Madam Chair, this concludes our overview of the 2022-23 main estimates for the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Protective Service.

We will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

[English]

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Was that eight minutes?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** It was nine minutes and forty-seven seconds. No one here is keeping count.

[English]

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** All right.

[Translation]

It was close.

**The Chair:** Thank you for these comments.

I also want to welcome Mr. Brookson, Mr. Savard and Ms. Vani.

We're only going to have a six-minute round of questions for each party, starting with Mr. Scheer, who will be followed by Mr. Turnbull, Ms. Gaudreau and Ms. Blaney.

Mr. Scheer, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm surprised you missed your opportunity to cut off the Speaker.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** That would have been amazing for an MP to tell the Speaker that he had run out of time, but I understand why you did not.

Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for joining us today.

I would like to clarify something you said. I think you said 12% of the increase was related to inflation.

Was that correct?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** That would have been for the PPS budget.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay.

Do you have a dollar amount of how much the inflation the government is causing is affecting the line item for the Parliamentary Protective Service?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** I'll go to Mr. Savard on that one.

**Mr. Éric Savard (Chief Financial Officer, Parliamentary Protective Service):** The total amount from inflation is about \$1.2 million.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay.

All in all, in the last few years we've seen some pretty big increases to the House of Commons' overall spending. The House grew by 10% after the 2015 election, but in some years since we have had 17% or 19% increases. In 2019-20, we had a 19.4% increase. In 2020-21, we had 23.6%, and now, again, another big increase.

What are some of the reasons for these big increases in spending above inflation and above the growth of the House of Commons' membership?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. St George.

**Mr. Paul St George (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons):** The House budget essentially has increased by the CPI, and this was a board decision made back in 2015. In terms of the dollar amounts, we see this year that the inflationary increase is about \$13.7 million, which is basically to offset the cost of the CPI rate, the cost of inflation, in terms of salaries as well as non-salary items.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** One of the challenges we've had with the pandemic and the restrictions that have been brought in with it is that all members have experienced the strain that's been put on House resources, such as accommodating various committees in a hybrid format, and challenges with technology and with translation especially.

We have been told over the past few years that when there is something extra, sometimes committee have to get cancelled because there's a complete lack of resources. Now we're facing a situation in the coming weeks, if the House passes the Liberal motion, in which we're going to be sitting until midnight regularly until the end of the session.

What impact do you think this is going to have on the ability of the committees to do their work if they've already been strained and now more resources are going to have to be diverted to the late night House sittings?

**Mr. Charles Robert (Clerk of the House of Commons):** In fact, Mr. Scheer, we do anticipate that there could be an impact. It will really depend on how the House wants to arrange its business and how often the government uses the option to sit until midnight.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** When the House had midnight sittings last spring, we understand that there were about eight committee meetings per week that were cancelled.

Is that about what we could expect? Has the House ramped up in anticipation of this?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** The ability to ramp up is in fact going to be determined by the resources that are available to us for interpretation.

At the same time, we also know that this is a busy period for the Senate. Interpretation has obligations to serve both Houses, as well as other functions related to government, and the House has priority over committees.

If the House decides to sit on a regular basis until midnight, we are certain that it will have an impact, particularly if the Senate itself, at the same time, decides to sit.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** So there is one parliamentary envelope or pool for interpretation that the Senate and the House both draw from?

• (1205)

**Mr. Charles Robert:** That's correct.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** The House doesn't have its own pool?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** It's the pool not only for Parliament, basically, but also for other government services.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles Robert:** The 60 interpreters we have on call and the others who might be available are not exclusively used by Parliament.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I see. Where does Parliament fit in the pecking order?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** Near the top.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay. I just wanted to make sure of that.

I'm sorry to loop back to the increase, but can you just repeat what the overall increase is? Is the 3.5% the only increase this year over last year?

**Mr. Paul St George:** The increase itself is broken up into different components. One is related to the CPI. That's what we award to the members' budgets. As well, what we saw with increases was related to one-time events in terms of security and in terms of initiatives and stuff like that. They essentially add up to about \$5 million this year. Those are "one time" in nature, some of them particularly related to COVID-19.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** What's the total percentage increase year over year if you add in everything, such as the CPI and inflation?

**Mr. Paul St George:** It would be 3.5% this year over last year.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Total?

**Mr. Paul St George:** Total.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** So that was the total increase. Okay.

On the Parliamentary Protective Service side, I was Speaker at the tail end, just as the entity was being constructed. Overall, is there any feedback on whether or not that has achieved the goal of streamlining, of finding efficiencies and of eliminating duplications, especially as it relates to cost? Have we seen increases or decreases or about the same level of spending? Where would you rate the impact of the new service on the cost of providing security on the Hill?

**Mr. Paul St George:** I think I'll ask Mr. Brookson or Mr. Savard to answer.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Okay.

**Mr. Éric Savard:** Thank you for your question, Mr. Scheer. It's a bit of a complicated one.

When we were initially created, we had the RCMP element protecting the grounds of the precinct. Therefore, through the transition we managed to gain some savings from removing the RCMP and replacing them with our own personnel. Those savings have been basically reinvested within the service to grow the support functions and the administration.

Overall, the cost of security didn't increase that much for the last couple of years. This year is the first in three years that we have asked for a substantial increase of about 10%.

As well, as the nature of the work gets more complicated—I would have to pass it back to Mr. Brookson on the nature of the security services that we offer and the threat level that exists—I believe some of the objectives initially when PPS was created have been achieved, but the threat environment has evolved. That's what we need to keep up with, to my understanding.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just so we all know, it's a little bit inconsistent with our traditional meetings, where everything goes through the chair. I want to say thank you to Mr. Scheer for the tone and temperament of that exchange for the benefit of interpreters. As long as we're not speaking over each other, we're good with that. As long as we are professional and honourable, as members always are, we will continue at this pace.

I'll now pass it over to Mr. Turnbull for six minutes.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me first say thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. I'm sorry I can't join you in person, but I do want to thank you for the tireless work you put in every day to make our House of Commons function.

I have two lines of questioning. Then I hope to share my time with my colleague Ms. Romanado.

To the Parliamentary Protective Service folks, just given what we saw during the occupation of downtown Ottawa, which I won't recount at length, certainly when you talk about an "evolving threat environment", I really see that this incident was something that tested all of us and the Parliamentary Protective Service. It certainly brought up many concerns for the health and safety of members of Parliament and staff on the Hill.

Given that, will this change the budgeting considerations in the future for PPS? What security measures are now necessary on the Hill that weren't before?

Perhaps I will direct that to Larry Brookson, but I'm happy if anybody else wants to answer.

**Mr. Larry Brookson (Acting Director, Parliamentary Protective Service):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to be sensitive to speaking in the open with regard to what security measures we currently have in place. It's also important to note as context that the submission of these mains was in the pre-occupation period.

I know that's not answering your question, Mr. Turnbull, but I'm more than open, once we get into closed camera, to talk more specifically about ongoing threats and the service's ability to continue to be where it needs to be to protect parliamentarians, staffers and members of the public who are on the precinct.

• (1210)

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I will just follow up quickly, Madam Chair, with a question through you to Mr. Brookson based on that.

The estimates that we see in front of us do not include an added budget for the evolving threat environment that may be represented by that incident of the occupation of downtown Ottawa. Would that be correct?

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** That's correct, Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Would you anticipate, through you, Madam Chair, an increase to the overall PPS budget for the future in order to be fully equipped to deal with those types of evolving threats?

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you, Mr. Brookson.

I'm going to move to the House of Commons administration folks who are there. Thank you again, all, for being there.

I want to talk about the hybrid setting. Certainly, we've operated for two years in a hybrid setting. I think this is becoming more popular. I think we've all experienced advantages with this added capability. Yet, there have also been challenges, right? We've experienced the benefits, but there have also been challenges.

My staff team and I, for example, just recently planned a big event on the Hill for stakeholders, members of Parliament and senators, and we have really struggled to get the resources to have a sub-caucus meeting that is hybrid and has translation services. I'm concerned about this. It's very frustrating for members of Parliament. I've certainly heard it from some of my colleagues. I wonder just how this is being addressed in the current budget. Will there be more resources and a solution for increased capacity to have more hybrid sittings, especially for sub-caucuses and special events that members of Parliament are organizing?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** I think the answer to your question depends on the availability of interpretation services. To date, that has really limited our capacity to provide support.

I think the conversation really has to take place with Public Works to see what can be done to build the pool of interpreters and what qualifications they need to secure in order to be effective in providing support for services on the Hill and elsewhere within government.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Is there a budget implication to that? It sounds like there's a capacity issue there in terms of drawing from the same pool and needing more trained people, perhaps. Is there a budget implication for the resources that are needed in order to accommodate all of the meetings on the Hill? Has the assessment been done of how much more of a budget we need?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** I don't think we can really answer that question quite definitively at this point. We don't really know what demand growth there will be. We are limited now because of the interpretation services' capacity. Once that's adjusted and the members decide that they want to expand the range of meetings they want to hold that need to be supported by the administration, we will make an assessment of the impact that it will have on our resources and respond accordingly.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Let me just say that I really appreciate the work that our translation and interpretive services are doing every day to support us. I know they're working hard. This is not an issue with the current interpreters. They're fantastic people behind the scenes who work tirelessly every day to support us. Thank you to them. I just think we need more wonderful people like them.

Thank you, Mr. Robert.

I'm going to hand it over to Ms. Romanado. Hopefully I have a little time left.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I know I don't have very much time; I just have one question. This may sound like a bizarre question.

I've noticed over the last couple of years since we've moved from Centre Block to West Block that there is no canopy or overhang over the entrance doors that we go through when we're coming across Wellington to West Block.

I witnessed a chunk of ice and snow almost hit a Parliamentary Protective Service member, let alone members of Parliament or staff who are walking in. Is there a plan in the mains to address that? I am quite concerned. They have no protection from the elements or from falling snow or ice from the roof of West Block.

Thank you.

• (1215)

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** I think Mr. Patrice would take that.

**Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons):** Yes, thank you for that information, first of all.

We're going to have a discussion with Public Works. Public Works basically owns the building and does improvements of that nature. There's been discussion about a kind of cover of the entrance of the West Block. As you can often see, the maintenance of the building, snow removal and so on is done regularly by Public Works contractors.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, I want to thank my colleagues, because they have answered some of my questions, and our time is precious.

I'm going to continue in the same vein. I am very happy to participate in this meeting. This is the first time I can imagine what Quebecers and Canadians would like to say to you. So I would like to thank you and congratulate you on your excellent work.

Of course, I have a special message for interpreters, since I think they have had a hard time. I have been in office since 2019, so I can still say that I am a new parliamentarian. But I did not expect to experience problems with technology. Furthermore, I have found interpreters to be a valuable resource. Sometimes we can be a bit of a pain in the neck with our French, but it's our job, and we're very proud of these services.

People have heard a lot about the health and safety of interpreters. Yes, there has been an increase in the budget for tools, and we have just recently received some tools.

We probably won't know until the parliamentary break whether we will be working in hybrid mode and using technological tools. Have you budgeted for the amounts needed to make sure that everyone has good equipment and that the interpreters are treated well? I think interpreters have had health problems, and that is what we want to avoid. Do you have a prevention perspective for our esteemed interpreters?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** We have already put measures in place to ensure the safety of interpreters, and especially their health. We are constantly making improvements to the equipment because, as you

know, we have received complaints about the technology and the sound. This is one of our concerns. I know very well that the technology and digital services have taken steps to ensure that the equipment used by the interpreters is the best it can be.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I extend my greetings to the 60 interpreters. I know there are four new ones who have just arrived. I hope you don't have any concerns, because resources are scarce.

I looked at the expenditure budget in more detail, and I have a question about the Parliamentary Protective Service heading. It talks about the acquisition of machinery and equipment. I understand that it was necessary to acquire technological equipment. However, there has been a significant increase in just two years.

Can you give us some further explanations on that? Do we need to modernize the fleet?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Savard, you have the floor.

**Mr. Éric Savard:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Gaudreau.

Indeed, the vehicle fleet is one of the items where there have been increases. There are all sorts of protective equipment that we use as well. Some investments have been made to equip our people with the tools they need to do their job. Also, we've made some leasehold improvements in some of our work spaces. All of these factors have resulted in these recent increases.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I would like to have your opinion on the evaluation that will take place over the next few weeks of security on Parliament Hill and in the Parliamentary Precinct.

We are very concerned about the scarcity of labour and the modulations of security. How do you see that? Obviously, we will have the opportunity to talk to you for advice, but I think it would be interesting to tell people how concerned you are about it and how you are preparing for it.

• (1220)

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Brookson, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** The investments that we've asked for in the main estimates, again, were pre-occupation. For the question of what we are going to be putting in place moving forward for the immediate...those are discussions that still need to take place as to what level of investment we're going to need to put that into the service, particularly when we're talking about what the precinct is going to look like moving forward.

[Translation]

I apologize for not having been able to answer you in French.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Your French is excellent, Mr. Brookson.

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** Thank you.



I'm not very confident, but I keep trying—

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** It's the same for me in English, but I'm working on it.

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** Thank you.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** The important thing is that we manage to understand each other well. By the way, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the interpreters once again.

I want to talk about the electronic aspect.

As we have seen, there has been a significant change in terms of what is being done to the Centre Block. Is there going to be a significant increase in the budget, given the new technologies and the subsequent need for equipment or other things?

What is the situation there?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Patrice, would you like to answer this question?

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** Thank you for your question.

Actually, when it comes to technology investments, both in terms of the replacement cycle and the addition of new technologies, the necessary funds are provided for in the budget. This ensures that members, their staff and the House Administration have the resources, equipment and tools to do their jobs.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you.

I have no further questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Chair. I thank all of our witnesses for being here today. I know that the last several months have been incredibly taxing on everyone, and I want to recognize all the hard work that you provided to us during that time.

The first question I want to ask is around committees. We know that this is an ongoing challenge for sure. I know it's not easy for me to tell some of my members that we're going to have to cancel our committee to accommodate another.

I'm wondering if we could get a little clarity about where the gap is. Is it in technology? Is it in technology and interpretation, or is it simply in the role of the interpreters who serve us?

**Mr. Charles Robert:** There are always going to be capacity limits depending on how far you stretch it. In the current environment in which we are working, it is largely the factor of interpretation and its ability to serve, given the limited number of qualified interpreters who can perform the job.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Okay.

I know that the interpreters have had a very hard time in the last few years. We know that injuries have increased dramatically. People have not had the proper technology. It's been a challenge trying to get the best technology.

My next question is if there is a need for better investment in tools that will support our interpreters so that they have fewer injuries. I'm not the expert, of course. The other part of the question is this. Is part of our challenge based around the fact that we do have interpreters who are having to take time off because of their injuries?

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** On the nature of virtuality and so on in terms of the technology, we are making the necessary investment. Not only that, we're continuing to pursue this in terms of improvement in the technological aspects.

You're right. That mode of work for interpreters is challenging for them in terms of their health and physically. That's why they cannot do the same length of time as if it was a physical meeting. We're continuing, obviously, to leverage our capacity, our knowledge and also experts in the industry to continue to try to improve the working environment for interpreters.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** The last part is around injury. Are we losing so many interpreters to injury that it is making it harder for us to have as many committees as we may want?

**Mr. Michel Patrice:** For that question, I would unfortunately direct you to the interpretation bureau, which is public works, but obviously we looked at the number, and we look at each incident to make sure that from the House perspective we're doing our best to reduce that amount of injury.

• (1225)

**Mr. Charles Robert:** There's also the reality of the pandemic and the fact that interpreters, too, are liable to catching the virus. That, too, has an impact on their ability to serve us.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

I cannot say enough good things about the interpreters. They are always very generous with me, so I want to acknowledge their incredible work and their patience through this very hard time.

**Voices:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I want to come over to some questions about the PPS. The Deputy Speaker spoke very well in his presentation to us. Thank you for being here to represent Anthony.

There is one thing that I'm not clear on and need a little bit more clarification on. What is the role between the PPS and the RCMP? Has that completely been done, and who is fully responsible for the protective services in the parliamentary settings? I'm trying to understand that better.

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** I remain the last RCMP officer on the Hill. It's been completely decoupled from the service. The two Speakers run the direction of the service, and that's where I take my marching orders from.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Who does the PPS directly report to? Is that the Speaker?

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** It's to both Speakers, yes.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you so much for that.

We know that during the occupation, there was a tremendous amount of work for them. By and large, they did an incredible job with very trying circumstances.

One of the questions that I have relating to this budget is, and you referenced several times that it was not accounted for when these estimates were sent in.... We know that in terms of staffing, there was a lot of overtime and there were a lot of people who were supposed to be on vacation who were asked to not go on vacation in order to accommodate the situation.

I'm wondering about those impacts. How is the PPS doing, being able to fulfill the work that they need to do now after going through such a hard time?

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** Our main focus is on our front line, so our employees who work for the service. We spent quite a bit of time in reaching out and providing the necessary assistance, particularly to our employees who were most impacted by the occupation.

I'm going to tell you, it was broad. It wasn't just the impact on our employees, it was the impact on their respective families. A lot of our employees were not able to be with their families, because we had them working almost non-stop.

We took the time, as a service family, to reach out to our employees, whether it was through assistance, psychologists or whatever. We keep reminding our employees that their mental wellness is an absolute priority for the service. That's not going to change for us.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm sorry. I have just a few more seconds.

I want to check on the economic part of that, with having to pay that kind of overtime, having to make people not take their vacation

and postponing that for a period. What are the impacts for us in a budgetary way?

**Mr. Éric Savard:** In total, the cost of the convoy for PPS was about \$6.3 million in overtime accrued expenditures. I should say that not all of it was taken; a lot of it will be taken on leave. In total, it will be about \$4.5 million.

The employees had a choice to either be paid for the overtime or take it as compensatory leave. In the future months, they'll be able to take the time off and enjoy time with their families.

**Mr. Larry Brookson:** I'll pass that to Éric.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to say, on this National Day of Mourning, I think it's quite fitting that we've been talking about our workers, those who have died and those who have suffered illness or injury. I think it's been a really good exchange. We also think about all of those, to the last comments, who surround them and who have been impacted. It's been a nice exchange.

I want to thank all members and all witnesses for being with us today.

Now, we will switch over to an in camera session to continue our meeting. We will suspend for a couple of minutes.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

---







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>