



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Board of Internal Economy

TRANSCRIPT

NUMBER 002

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Thursday, October 2, 2025



Board of Internal Economy

Thursday, October 2, 2025

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia (Speaker of the House of Commons): Good morning, colleagues. It's a pleasure to see you again. This is meeting number two of the Board of Internal Economy.

You have your briefing book, I assume. It shows that the first item on the agenda is simply the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting. I don't see any comments or questions on that, so I don't see any opposition to passing it.

The second item on the agenda is business from the previous meeting. Is there any discussion?

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron (Whip of the Bloc Québécois): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good morning. I didn't have time to say hello to you before the meeting started.

I have a question about something from the previous meeting, which was the request for accommodation for a member. These things need to be discussed in camera, but I'll leave it at that. However, when the meeting goes in camera later today, I would like to ask a question about that.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Yves Perron: Can I now talk about the letter I sent you, or do you want me to wait a bit?

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: You can speak to it.

Yves Perron: Mr. Chair, I imagine everyone has read the correspondence sent to us this summer regarding interpretation and translation services. I was a good student and did my homework. I've met with different people on this, including House staff. For the Bloc Québécois members—and I think my colleagues from the other parties will agree—it would be important for the House administration to provide us with an update on its plans, because it is in the process of renegotiating freelance contracts. Negotiations with union members will take place a little later, in the winter of 2026. You know that interpretation and translation services are essential for us, even when we're bilingual. This is no surprise to anyone. I discussed it with colleagues earlier, before the meeting.

First, for us, it is important to be able to communicate in our official language. That's why you'll always see me wearing the earpiece, regardless of the circumstances.

Second, even when you can speak in English, the discussions sometimes become extremely technical. As the agriculture and agri-food critic since 2019, I can attest to the fact that sometimes

there are terms we don't know in English and that discussions can go quickly. It's therefore very important to have high-quality interpretation services. However, during the few meetings where interpretation was done remotely, I can attest that there was a loss of quality.

I propose that, at a future meeting of the Board of Internal Economy, the heads of interpretation and translation services come and present the situation to us and tell us about the plans, because we're talking about making cuts and hiring freelancers based on the lowest bidder approach. We're hearing all kinds of things. If we want to be serious and do a good job, we have to get the right information. After that, we'll see if we need to go further. That's what I propose, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That would also give them a chance to hear our concerns. The clerk will add that to the agenda for the next meeting.

Does anyone else want to speak to that?

I don't see anyone, so we'll go to the third item on the agenda, delegating authority to members' employees. We're all aware of the new procedure. Apparently we have to submit expense accounting.

I would now invite Paul St George, House of Commons chief financial officer, and José Fernandez, deputy chief financial officer, to speak.

• (1105)

Paul St George (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm here today to ask the Board of Internal Economy to approve an amendment to the current policy for delegating financial authority to members' employees.

After the My Financials expense management platform was implemented, questions about the delegation of financial authority arose. The administration examined current practices to identify efficiency gains for members while ensuring strict financial controls.

This policy prohibits members from delegating approval authority to their employees for certain expense categories: advertising, contracts for professional services, hospitality, gifts and travel.

It is proposed that the policy be amended to allow members to delegate approval authority to their employees for all expense categories up to \$1,000. If the board approves the policy amendment, the Governance and Administration By-law will be updated accordingly.

[English]

It should be noted that members may choose to not delegate their approval authority and that they remain responsible for all expenses, whether they delegate or not. It is also important to note that, even with delegation, certain restrictions continue to apply to employees. They may not sign contracts related to staff employment or professional services on behalf of a member, and they may not approve their own claims.

Finance services will continue to actively monitor key controls, including spending patterns, to ensure sound financial practices. Higher visibility categories such as advertising and hospitality will still require proper justification, and all delegations will remain subject to regular audits.

Other compensating controls that are in place include, with the new SAP Concur system, automated system checks and embedded audit trails. We also have policy-based controls to provide active oversight preventing irregularities. In addition, before publication, review of disclosure reports by members in finance will continue to test for accuracy.

The enhanced audit features of SAP Concur, along with our policies, enable expanded delegation across categories while ensuring that risk remains well managed. The proposed \$1,000 limit ensures that employees can manage routine expenses efficiently, while higher-value items remain under members' direct approval. This achieves a good balance, giving members greater flexibility, maintaining strong safeguards and reducing payment turnaround times.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my presentation, and I welcome any questions the board may have.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do any of my colleagues wish to speak?

[English]

I think there's general agreement that it's pretty straightforward.

We'll go to item four, update to the Board of Internal Economy's governance, bylaws and rules and procedure.

It is our law clerk, Michel Bédard, who will speak to this.

[Translation]

Michel Bédard (Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are seeking the Board of Internal Economy's approval to update the Governance and Administration By-law and the board's rules and administrative practices. The goal is to improve clarity, update the bylaw and the rules, and ensure they are consistent with the board's administrative practices.

There are five components to the update.

First is walkarounds. Currently, the Rules of Practice and Procedure allow walkarounds only for the adoption of bylaws. In practice, the board also makes decisions unrelated to bylaws by means of walkarounds, and members signify approval by email. The proposed amendment would change the rules to reflect this practice while maintaining the consensus-based approach to decision-making that guides the board.

• (1110)

[English]

The second area of changes that are proposed pertains to the threshold for certain decisions.

At present, according to the rules, five members can adopt a by-law via walk-around. That said, five members will not always represent the majority of members. The BOIE may have a larger membership depending on the number of recognized parties. This has occurred in the past, when the BOIE had 11 members.

The proposed amendment is to require at least five members and no less than the majority to make a decision via walk-around. The same issue exists respecting the waiver for a notice of meeting, and we would propose the same solution: five members and no less than the majority to waive any notice requirement.

The third proposal concerns in camera transcripts. Currently, only the public portion of BOIE meetings are transcribed. By contrast, committees produce confidential transcripts of their in camera meetings for consultation by members. The proposal would be to prepare confidential transcripts of in camera board meetings, which would be kept securely within the clerk's office. This would support accurate minutes, assist administration in implementing decisions of the BOIE, facilitate follow-ups and enable BOIE members to review past discussions.

If the board agrees to this proposal, it may also provide for circumstances where in camera transcripts would not be prepared, for example, when the board meets in camera with external auditors without House administration being present.

[Translation]

The fourth amendment concerns the clerk's management group. The bylaw stipulates the composition of the clerk's management group, but it is outdated. Two positions are not included in the bylaw: the chief executive administrator—formerly the deputy clerk, administration—and the chief operations officer. The deputy clerk position was renamed deputy clerk, procedure. The proposal is to amend the governance bylaw to reflect these changes.

Lastly, we are proposing an editorial change to correct an incoherence that resulted in the clerk reporting to the board on behalf of the board. This is just a technical amendment.

[English]

In closing, these updates are not substantive policy shifts. They ensure that the bylaws and the rules reflect the current BOIE practices. Note that the relevant amendments to the bylaws and rules are an addendum to this submission. Also note that the changes respecting the preparation of in camera transcripts would not require an amendment to the bylaws or the rules; a simple decision from the BOIE would suffice.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Gerretsen, go ahead.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Chief Government Whip): I have a quick question with regard to the third recommendation to require that at least five members and no less than the majority of members must agree in order to make a decision without holding a meeting.

Is this to say that it requires five members to make a decision or the decision? Are five members required in order to agree that a decision will be made, or are you suggesting that five members, i.e., a majority, are required to make the decision? It's on an actual issue and not whether or not to deal with the issue.

Michel Bédard: That's correct.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: That's different from how we operate in here though, right? In here, everything's done by consensus, pretty much, at least in the time that I've been here. I've never participated in a vote. Would that require a majority?

Michel Bédard: Currently, the issue we want to fix is that the bylaws, as they are written, only require five members.

I suspect five members was a majority of members when the bylaw was adopted, but there might be circumstances where it will not represent a majority.

There is a consensus principle that governs the proceedings of the BOIE, and it's self-imposed by members, but as with any other parliamentary body, in theory, a majority will suffice to make a decision. If members want to preserve the consensus principle in the decision-making process, we could find a way to preserve that via walk-around.

• (1115)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: It's a requirement for five members, but a majority has to be in favour, so that's four members. There are six of us, right? Don't forget the Bloc.

Michel Bédard: The requirement of five members to make a decision and five members in favour to make a decision without a meeting—

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: It's more than a majority.

Michel Bédard: It's more than a majority now because the BOIE has seven members, but what we want to prevent is an issue in the future when the BOIE would have 11 members, as has happened, for example, in some past parliaments. It's just to make sure that, for example, you wouldn't have a decision that is made by five members who do not represent the majority of the BOIE. It has no immediate impact. It's just to make sure to foresee any possible issues in the future.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. MacKinnon.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Following on that, the only one, in my view, that perhaps betrays the collegiality and, at times, candour with which we conduct our deliberations here is the one where transcripts and other records would be kept of in camera deliberations. Given the requirement to go in camera on delicate matters of personnel and other private matters that are properly dealt with in a private setting, I would put it to my colleagues that would be one I would be uncomfortable with. I think this is a solution looking for a problem, frankly.

I would urge us to not accept that recommendation, while accepting and thanking the administration for its other recommendations with which we are largely comfortable.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Next, I have Mr. Warkentin and then Mr. Perron and Mr. Scheer.

Chris Warkentin (Chief Opposition Whip): I want to talk about the in camera transcripts, as well. There are times when there will be a decision made and staff are in the room. There are also circumstances in which staff will not be in the room. My reading of this is that they would be able to look to the transcripts to see what happened in the room.

Like my colleague, I have concerns about the way I see it's written. We may not want transcripts at all. I'm not opposed to striking that. However, I certainly don't want a transcript that could be referenced by staff in a meeting in which staff had been asked not to be part of.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Would you like to respond to that?

Michel Bédard: The preparation of transcripts for the in camera portion of meetings is an option that we put before the board. If the board is in agreement with the policy, there could be exceptions that could be made. One of the exceptions that I mentioned in my speaking notes was exactly this exception. On an annual basis, when BOIE members meet with the external auditor and ask administration to leave—if the board were to agree to the preparation of transcripts in all other cases—in that specific case, there would not be any transcript.

There could be other situations. In the past, the BOIE in only a few instances has met with a very limited number of staff. It could decide case by case not to prepare in camera transcripts.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Does that answer your question?

Chris Warkentin: Yes, it does. I know that we don't keep the minutes when the auditors are here, but there have been times on personnel matters when the same circumstances have developed. I think there's a consensus developing over here that we would maybe ask administration to look for an alternative wording, where we have a negative option, where we don't keep transcripts unless we prescribe that a particular meeting has transcripts developed.

• (1120)

Michel Bédard: This is already the case right now, so the status quo is that no transcripts are prepared unless the BOIE is making the request that a transcript be prepared.

Chris Warkentin: I think we're comfortable with that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With respect to my colleagues' comments, I don't object to changing the part about transcripts to provide for certain exceptions as required. Perhaps you can propose wording. That doesn't bother me much. My concern is that decisions may be made without consensus via walkaround.

It is the prerogative of a board of directors, which is kind of what we are, to discuss the decisions being made. We can each explain our point of view and, sometimes, because we are open-minded people, we can agree to vote in concert. However, when this happens via walkaround, we don't discuss things and we don't even know how our colleagues voted. It may be fine as it is, but if a decision is made without consensus, I find that more troubling.

I very openly asked Mr. Bédard about the wording. It was mentioned very quickly. I would be more comfortable if it made a point of mentioning that we will maintain the consensus principle, so I would like to offer a proposal to that effect. If my colleagues would like to see it in writing, I believe copies are available. I'll keep talking while they're being distributed.

I think it was Mr. Gerretsen who talked about votes. The text you're about to receive doesn't go as far as I would have liked. I would also have liked to propose that decisions made without consensus via walkaround should be subject to an in-person vote during the next meeting. I didn't include that in my proposal because I didn't want to push things too far, but if my colleagues want to propose something to that effect, I would support that.

I believe everyone has a copy of my proposal now, so I'll read it to you:

It is agreed that the principle of consensus shall continue to apply to resolutions submitted for approval by means of a walkaround. Such a resolution shall be deemed to have been adopted only when all members of the board have voted in favour, unless a member explicitly asks the clerk to proceed with a formal vote count, in which case the approval threshold provided for in the rules of procedure shall apply.

At that point, your recommendation about the threshold of five members constituting at least a majority being needed would apply.

I think that's very clear. A member would have to request a vote. Ideally, the vote would take place at a meeting, whether in person or online, so we can discuss the matter. You'll see why I'm saying that when we get to the in camera portion of the meeting, because I'll be talking about a previous decision that was made via walkaround.

That's my proposal, if my colleagues agree.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's kind of like an amendment. Mr. Scheer is next on the list, but we can talk about your proposal, and I can give him the floor after that.

Mr. Scheer, did you want to speak to the matter we were debating before?

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (House Leader of the Official Opposition): I was just going to speak to the transcript question that I already—

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Why don't we discuss this first, and then we'll go to you—

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Sure.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: —on the transcript question, yes?

[*Translation*]

Mr. MacKinnon, you have the floor.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: As I understand it, that's a description of the status quo. I'd want to look at the wording more closely because we just got it. I think we should consider this proposal at a future meeting. I don't think we're ready to consider and approve it today.

• (1125)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Perron, you'd like to change your wording a little if I understand correctly.

Yves Perron: Yes, actually, I want to add something to clarify it. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is right about this describing the status quo, but this makes it clear in the text. The problem is that it says the consensus rule will remain in place, but it doesn't clearly explain what constitutes consensus, nor does it state that someone has to request a vote in order for a vote to take place. That's what I want to address.

If my colleagues want to take the time to analyze my proposal, that's fine. However, I believe that, when we make decisions, especially here, it's important to have a discussion and exchange viewpoints. My party has a general orientation, but it's possible that someone else's arguments could give me pause and lead me to agree with a proposal I might initially have been inclined to reject. That's the goal.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I want to make sure I understand.

If there's no consensus during the walkaround, would there be an in-person vote?

Eric Janse (Clerk of the House of Commons, House of Commons): Someone could request a vote, but it would be done via email.

Just to clarify, I would say that, typically, walkarounds happen when it's 110% certain everyone is in agreement. More contentious issues aren't usually handled via walkaround because, as Mr. Perron just said, it's best to have a discussion before the vote. Nonetheless, voting via email can be arranged, especially for more urgent matters.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. We can vote by email, even in a walkaround, but there won't be any discussion.

Does anyone else want to comment on Mr. Perron's proposal? I don't see anyone.

Mr. Scheer, you have the floor to talk about transcripts.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I won't repeat what's been said. I largely agree.

I don't believe the practice at any standing committee is to keep transcripts when the committee goes in camera, is it?

They do? Okay.

Any decisions are minuted when we're in camera.

Eric Janse: All the positive decisions are minuted, if it's something that's approved. If something was negatived, that's not minuted. If something is adopted, that's minuted.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I'd certainly be in favour of striking out that recommendation. If there's an extraordinary circumstance when members of the board decide they want a transcript for something, I'm sure we can quickly come to an agreement on that and proceed.

I think the status quo for in camera meetings is serving its purpose.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're in favour of the status quo. Is that what we're saying?

Eric Janse: If we look at the five suggestions, I think there's agreement on two of the four. The one about the transcripts is being withdrawn and not being proceeded with, and the one about walkarounds will be brought back at a future meeting once everybody's looked at the proposition by Monsieur Perron.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Does that meet with everyone's agreement?

Okay.

[*Translation*]

We will take a short break before we move in camera.

[*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>