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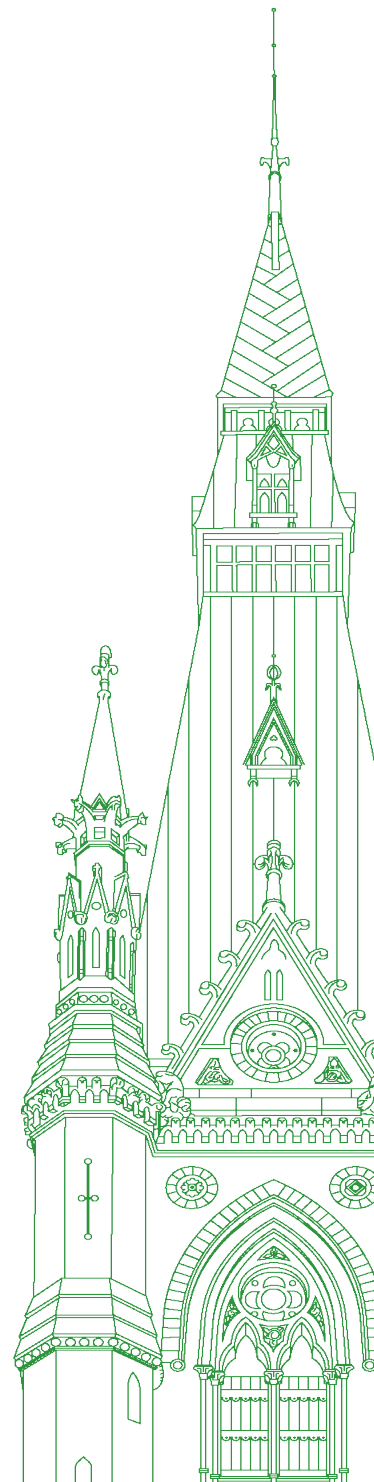
Board of Internal Economy

TRANSCRIPT

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Thursday, June 11, 2026



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• (1100)

[English]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia (Speaker of the House of Commons):

I call the meeting to order.

We have quite a bit on the agenda today, so I'm going to try to move things along.

Item number one is the minutes from the previous meeting. I assume we agree with the minutes of the previous meeting.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Item number two is business arising from previous meetings.

Monsieur Perron.

[Translation]

Yves Perron (Whip of the Bloc Québécois): Good morning, everyone.

I'll try to be quick. I still have a lot to tell you about the interpretation issue. Last time, I promised you that I would keep you abreast of developments on the issue.

I met with the minister, as we agreed. It was a good meeting. I also had the privilege of meeting with Mr. Lymburner. Both meetings were in private. The discussions were cordial. We talked about the fact that we need to work together. We also talked about the foundations of transparency. You will recall the fixes that were made at previous meetings of the Board of Internal Economy. We went over that a bit, and going forward, I think we should see more transparency and co-operation. That's positive.

I also spoke again with the people from the International Association of Conference Interpreters, or AIIC, and the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, or CAPE, to follow up on the issue. I imagine that my colleagues have looked at the answers we've received.

In both meetings, there was talk of creating a kind of follow-up committee. I'll call it that for the moment, but the name may change. It would be a committee where we could do regular follow-ups on the interpretation issue, and elected members from each party in the House of Commons will sit on it. It would be open to everyone. I think it could be an interesting proposal.

Of course, as always, I have in-depth questions. For example, why does the translation bureau absolutely have to operate on cost recovery? Do we really need to rationalize and cut staff?

I also still have concerns about the use of artificial intelligence. There seems to be a lot of push for that. We are not against it, no one is against virtue, but it has to be a tool and not a substitute, in my opinion, because human beings always have to check what is done. There are a lot of things we need to work on while preserving excellence and the equivalency of both official languages. That is fundamental.

However, I would like to raise an issue regarding the proposed new committee, and I will follow up with the minister and Mr. Lymburner. I think it shouldn't just be elected officials. There should also be representatives from interpreter groups, such as the AIIC and CAPE, so that we can get their input and so that it will be an actual committee.

With my years of experience in parliamentary government, I know that committees can also sometimes be used to sideline issues. I'm not saying that's the case here, obviously. I believe that people are acting in good faith, and I sensed a willingness to co-operate. However, I wouldn't want this new committee to be used to make us stop talking about it here and then try to bury the issue and buy time. I don't think that's the goal. I really felt that it was proposed constructively.

I'm personally excited about this and I hope it will move forward. I promised my colleagues that I would keep them apprised of developments. That's what I did on my end.

That was the positive side. However, there is also a negative side. I have bad news as well. I am sure everyone remembers that I raised the incident involving the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We had access to interpretation, but we understood absolutely nothing. That same evening, the Board of Internal Economy intervened quickly, and accredited interpreters were recruited at the last minute for the next day. It was better, but there were a lot of challenges.

We've talked about that with Mr. Lymburner and the minister today. There was a commitment to make sure it didn't happen again. Unfortunately, I have received excerpts from the meetings of May 27 and May 28 from the same commission where uncertified interpreters were used. I will try to remain calmer than the first time I spoke to you about it, but what we are hearing is not acceptable. We hear someone stuttering. It is a privilege to understand both official languages, as I said. However, if we pay attention to the English version, which we hear a little less loudly in the background, we realize that a unilingual francophone misses half the information. I think that's very serious, especially when we're talking about nuclear safety.

There was someone who said that he built himself a house, paying very close attention to the materials used, that he wanted to garden and that he was very worried about ending up near a nuclear power plant. Listening to the French interpretation, you don't understand any of that. I'm sure my colleagues agree with me that this is a danger, and it's my duty to inform them.

• (1105)

Also, I have already told you about the incidents that occurred at the Canada School of Public Service. There have been no new incidents, but we still have to keep this issue in mind.

I also heard that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission was not satisfied with the interpretation services it was offered and that it asked for major adjustments. I won't get into the details, so as not to make a diplomatic blunder, but I think it's my duty to inform my colleagues that the problem still exists. At the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, among others, we were formally promised that this would not happen again, and yet it has.

As I already mentioned, we can't always proceed by complaint, relying on Yves Perron, the whip of the Bloc Québécois, to grumble before the Board of Internal Economy. There has to be a mechanism, and we were promised that there would be one. It doesn't seem to have been put in place yet. Therefore, I come back to the idea of creating a committee to work together in the long term. I think that will be important and that it will have to include people on the very front lines, meaning interpreters. Otherwise, the committee will be pointless. That's my opinion, but I don't think it's far from the truth.

I will now talk about a more positive aspect, which is the written answers to the questions we asked. One of the things I asked was how the evaluation worked. In the past, four accredited interpreters evaluated exams. Then they added an administrator and an external evaluator who was not accredited. According to the information we received, the vote was 50-50 and, if there was a dispute, the administration decided.

The response we received reads as follows:

The four senior interpreters decided to consult each other and to provide one pooled result for each candidate, which accounted for 33% of the final grade. The weighting for Mr. Ball and for Mr. Jolicoeur was 33% each.

That adds up to 100%. It continues:

Once all of the evaluations were compiled, management looked at the results and the comments. In borderline cases, when the overall evaluation was positive but there were some specific reservations that did not allow a definitive conclu-

sion to be reached, Mr. Ball conducted a re-evaluation and that decision was determinative.

The administrator has the final say. It's not quite the same percentages as what we were given, but if the interpreters' vote counts for 33%, the external assessor's vote counts for 33% and it's the administrator who decides afterwards, that goes back to the information I had at the outset: It's 50-50 and the administration has the last word.

That explains the process, but there would have been no confusion if transparency had been shown from the outset. I want to acknowledge that. I thank the translation bureau for its transparency. Whether it has improved or not is debatable, but at least we have the information now, and it's clear.

Furthermore, in terms of the pass rate, we are told that it is equivalent to those seen previously and that the criteria have not been reduced. However, the evaluators have changed, so there may be variation. The only thing that wasn't explained is why the spring exam for people who want to go from TR-2 to TR-3 was cancelled. We didn't ask about that at the time, because we didn't have the information. These exams are important and are part of people's career path. It's a very demanding job, and people work hard to prepare for it. It was a big disappointment for them. When I raised it with Mr. Lymburner, I didn't get a lot of answers. He told me that the exam had not been cancelled, only postponed. I have not received any details.

I am raising the issue again because it worries me a bit. These people have to be able to advance, and we have to have a certain number of level 4 translators, because people are retiring or leaving the profession. We need to do long-term planning. It is always the same thing, Mr. Chair. We've talked about this privately, and I know you understand my point.

• (1110)

My concern is that I might find myself in a Parliament where I have the same interpretation services as those currently provided to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. If this is tolerated in government departments, agencies, and, it seems, at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission—I have fewer details on that situation, but that's what I've heard—it means it's coming our way at breakneck speed. So that's my follow-up on this issue.

Next, we received a response to our question regarding denied requests for interpretation. I must admit that I was a little surprised, as I had expected there to be more denials. We had to refuse or cancel 46 events for the House of Commons out of a total of 853 requests received, which represents a refusal rate of 5.4%. This is in line with what we've seen before. That's reassuring. Once again, I'm glad to have this information and transparency.

This raises the following question: with regard to the events for which we agreed to provide services, how often were these services provided by non-accredited interpreters, as happened during the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission meetings, excerpts of which we have? I would like to have that information. I'm not making any claims, since I don't have all the information, but this is a concern that could remain in this matter. That's what I had to say about interpretation.

In closing, I'd like to once again thank the people who have worked with me. I thank the minister, Mr. Lymburner, and, above all, the people at CAPE and the AIIC who keep me informed and with whom we discuss and collaborate to ensure the future of official languages in Parliament.

If anyone would like to comment on this, I am available to answer questions. Otherwise, I'd like to share another point that came up during a previous meeting.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I just want to say that, in my opinion, creating a committee to ensure better collaboration and to address cases that, as you say, are problematic or even unacceptable is a positive step forward. I commend you for taking the initiative to propose the creation of this committee. As you say, we need to ensure that it functions properly and is effective, but I believe you have offered a potential solution to resolve this ongoing problem.

What is your second point?

• (1115)

Yves Perron: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll try to keep this brief.

The second point concerns the request for an administrative audit that we submitted regarding the use of the House's funds. I sent you a letter on April 29, for which I quickly received an acknowledgment of receipt on April 30. However, we have not really received a response.

I raised the issue again at the next meeting of the Board of Internal Economy, which took place on May 7, and I received a communication from you on May 12. You told me that you had submitted this to the House administration, that they were conducting the necessary checks, and that we would receive a response. We have not received a response. Sometimes it can take longer, but I am concerned because there is no mention of this whatsoever in the Board of Internal Economy's documents, and I think this is important.

I'm not making baseless accusations—that's not my intention—but I think the information I've been given is significant enough that I should insist on follow-up regarding this verification or this "investigation," whatever the outcome may be—

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I think we're ready.

Yves Perron: Are we ready to respond to that? Do we have any information?

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, indeed.

I yield the floor to Mr. Bédard.

Michel Bédard (Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, House of Commons): Thank you for your question, Mr. Perron; it gives us the opportunity to provide you with this information.

After receiving your correspondence, we conducted administrative reviews and realized that there had been minor cost overruns related to advertising budgets. We're talking about a minimal amount of \$18. Some members' expenses amounted to \$750, while the maximum budget was \$732. The reimbursement was made via credit memos.

There were also minor cost overruns related to ticket purchases. The maximum budget for tickets is \$154, according to the policies of the Board of Internal Economy, and a few \$160 tickets were reimbursed. The necessary adjustments to recover the \$6 were also made in each case.

The article you referred to in your correspondence mentioned a specific MP's office. Follow-up was conducted to ensure that the actions taken by the staff of that office were within the scope of parliamentary duties, and the responses we received confirm that this is the case.

Yves Perron: So the audit was conducted in full, but at the office. Did you conduct any on-site checks to see how employees were utilized in promoting the event?

To put this in context, it was, after all, a major event that appeared to be semi-partisan. I always take care not to make false judgments, and I think that's appropriate at the Board of Internal Economy. However, appearances can be deceiving. There were reportedly long-term employee assignments. Was all of this verified?

Michel Bédard: We checked with the MP's offices and received assurances. It is not standard practice for us to conduct external investigations. We do not have the authority to compel people to provide us with information. Our starting point is the members of the House. If there were any irregularities or reasons to believe that the information we received did not comply with the policies of the Board of Internal Economy, we would have returned to request further information. However, that is not the case.

Yves Perron: All right.

Thank you for your efforts.

Since the request was made formally, in writing, would it be possible to submit a written response to the Board of Internal Economy for an upcoming meeting? The goal is to obtain details on what has been done.

Michel Bédard: Yes, absolutely.

Yves Perron: Perfect, thank you very much.

I have finished my follow-up on the latest meetings, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is there nothing else coming out of business from previous meetings?

Okay.

Number three is the LTVP working group update.

I would invite Mr. Kmiec, chair of the working group on the LTVP and the Centre Block rehabilitation; Mr. Dicaire, chief information officer; and Ms. Jennifer Garrett, assistant deputy minister from Public Services and Procurement Canada, to come to the front.

Tom Kmiec (Chair, Working Group on the LTVP and the Centre Block Rehabilitation, House of Commons):

Mr. Speaker, if I could indulge you and the rest of the BOIE, would it be okay to switch my presentation with that of the JIC? Madam Mendès is due to switch with the other chair occupant, and there are three of us in this room.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm sure there's no objection.

That's number seven. We'll do number six now.

Ms. Mendès, the floor is yours.

• (1120)

Alexandra Mendès (Chair, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association):

Good morning.

Thank you very much for welcoming us and for agreeing to change your agenda.

[Translation]

I am here as chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, or CPA, to seek your approval for the Parliament of Canada to host the 70th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, or CPC, in Ottawa in September 2027.

For your information, our branch was approached by the CPA Secretary General last February regarding the possibility of holding next year's conference in Canada.

The CPC is the CPA's annual conference. It is the largest annual gathering of Commonwealth parliamentarians, who come together to discuss parliamentary and global political issues. The CPC comprises several conferences, with various meetings and events taking place over the course of a week, including the General Assembly and the Plenary Session, meetings of the CPA International Executive Committee, as well as the three CPA networks: Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Small Commonwealth Parliaments, and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities.

[English]

"Small branches" is much easier to say than "*petites sections*". It doesn't make much sense, but it's okay.

[Translation]

An estimated 600 to 700 people from across the Commonwealth, representing approximately 56 countries and 180 legislatures, will take part in the CPC.

[English]

Following the secretary-general's initial communication, I initiated informal discussions with the association's executive committee regarding the possibility of hosting the CPC in 2027 and received positive feedback. On April 21, the executive committee agreed to

a motion to ask the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate to prepare a draft budget for its consideration.

On May 6, the executive committee reviewed the draft budget and agreed to submit it to the Joint Interparliamentary Council, where it was approved on June 2. The total amount being sought to host the conference is approximately \$1.8 million spread out over two years and to be shared by the Senate and House of Commons according to the usual thirty-seventy formula.

[Translation]

Canada last hosted the CPC in Halifax in 2022. Since then, the conference has been held in the African region, in Ghana and South Africa, in the Australian region, in Sydney, and in the Caribbean region, in Barbados.

The members of the Board of Internal Economy should also note that, prior to 2022, Canada had not hosted the CPC since 2004, a span of 18 years. It is therefore not unreasonable for the CPA to consider hosting the CPC again in 2027.

However, I would mention that the proposed funding model differs from that of 2022, since costs were shared with the provinces and territories at that time. This is primarily due to shorter timelines and the need to obtain approvals in each province or territory, as well as the fact that four of them will be holding elections in the fall of 2027.

[English]

In the broader context, there are some practical reasons why Canada is well positioned to host next year's conference.

First, there are a relatively small number of jurisdictions in the CPA that have the capacity to host such a large event, both in terms of the facilities required to accommodate such a large gathering and the resources available to organize and execute a conference of this scale.

Second, several potential jurisdictions that might otherwise have been able to accommodate the conference in 2027 are heading into elections themselves and are therefore not in a position to undertake the necessary planning.

Last, there are geopolitical considerations that make Canada an ideal location for next year's conference, given our strong ties across the Commonwealth.

Moreover, I would like to highlight the fact that significant efforts have been made to reduce costs in the budget. It is expected that there will be significant cost savings if the conference is held in Ottawa prior to the return of Parliament in September 2027, as we will be able to draw upon some of the parliamentary resources available.

This conference is an opportunity for Canada to once again demonstrate its leadership within the Commonwealth. Such a large gathering of Commonwealth parliamentarians is also an excellent occasion to further strengthen key international relationships that are based on shared values such as human rights, sustainable development and support for democracy. In today's ever-changing world, the conference also presents an opportunity to broaden our economic partnerships.

• (1125)

[Translation]

At the same time, this will allow us to showcase our beautiful country and, more specifically, the national capital region.

We therefore ask that you approve our proposal to host the 70th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ottawa in September 2027. For your information, the Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration approved our request earlier today.

Given that the summer recess is fast approaching, it is important that all necessary approvals be obtained so that staff can begin making the necessary arrangements for the conference. This will include securing a venue, negotiating contracts with hotels and handling numerous other logistical details to ensure the conference is a great success.

[English]

I would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

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

Yves Perron: Thank you.

Good morning, Ms. Mendès. It's a pleasure to have you here, under different circumstances.

You know that the Commonwealth isn't really part of the Bloc Québécois' DNA, but we understand the process and all that.

The question I have—

Alexandra Mendès: I'd like to say that Marie-Hélène Gaudreau is an excellent representative of women parliamentarians.

Yves Perron: Yes, and we do believe in international co-operation.

You mentioned a total cost of \$1.8 million. Unless I missed it, however, you didn't take into account the fact that if Canada doesn't host this conference, it will send a delegation, which will also entail costs. I imagine that would be less than \$1.8 million.

Have you calculated the difference?

Alexandra Mendès: There's no doubt that sending a delegation would cost much less than \$1.8 million.

Yves Perron: Yes, but it still reduces the overall cost. That's my question.

Alexandra Mendès: Yes.

Yves Perron: How much does sending a delegation usually cost?

Jeremy LeBlanc (Clerk Assistant and Director General, International and Interparliamentary Affairs): Allow me to answer that question.

It depends on the distance. Last year's conference was held in Barbados. The cost was lower than it will be this year, for instance, since the conference will be held in South Africa. Sending a delegation can cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

Yves Perron: Right.

In any case, it does bring down your total bill a little.

Alexandra Mendès: Yes.

Yves Perron: I have no objection to that. That will reassure you.

Thank you.

Alexandra Mendès: Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Go ahead, Mr. Scheer.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (House Leader of the Official Opposition):

I'm sorry if I missed a deeper explanation in your presentation. Do I understand correctly that the decision was made not to ask provincial associations?

Alexandra Mendès: There are four that will have elections next year.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Was the question asked? They can always say no, but if we don't ask, they'll never say yes.

Alexandra Mendès: I agree, but our Canadian conference is coming up in July. We'd have to pass that through the executive committee first and then each jurisdiction after. That would limit the time that our staff would have to prepare for the conference.

We know for a fact that the four jurisdictions that are having elections are going to say no.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Do you have to wait for them to have a gathering?

Alexandra Mendès: Yes. We have to have an executive meeting of the Canadian region.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Couldn't each provincial association make their own decision?

Jeremy LeBlanc: It's true that the Canada region typically meets during the regional conference of the summer. We could call for an extraordinary meeting, but the timelines for the approval in each of the 13 provincial and territorial legislatures would probably spill out. There are a number of those legislatures that aren't meeting anymore, while some are heading into elections and some have elections in 2027.

It was felt unlikely that we'd be able to secure the necessary agreement in the shortened time frame that we have.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: For the sake of 13 stamps, we might find—

Alexandra Mendès: If I may, nothing stops us from talking about it and putting it to the executive committee come this July when we go to the Canadian conference. If they want to join in, we'll be very happy to have them, but we would need to start organizing right now. Getting the convention centre itself is going to be a challenge to make sure that we have it for those dates, along with the hotels and all of that. That's why we were a bit pressed for time in terms of moving on.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: There is one other point.

I understand that not every member of the Commonwealth has the capacity to host an event like this. My understanding is that there are certain members of the Commonwealth that understand they would host more often than some of the other countries.

We hosted one in 2004 and then the next one was in 2022, and now, just five years later, we're hosting another one. I would maybe flag it that we would expect some break in the time between this one and a subsequent one.

• (1130)

Alexandra Mendès: If I may, Mr. Scheer, there are nine regions in the Commonwealth. When Canada took a break for 18 years, we didn't host any conferences because we refused the terms of the organization then—the expenses were too big and they expected all the organizers to pay for lodgings—and we decided that Canada was getting out.

For 18 years, we refused to hold the conference until the modalities changed. When we organized in 2022, it was actually meant to be in 2020, but due to the pandemic, we had to change the dates and it ended up being in 2022. We did skip two cycles when it would have been up to us to host it.

Now, because of the reality of elections in the other jurisdictions that would have the capacity, mostly in Asia, we were approached by the secretary-general because we seemed to be the only one that could have possibly hosted this at that time.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are there any other questions or comments?

We're being asked if we will approve this \$1.8 million.

Is there an issue? Do we have to discuss where it's going to come from?

Eric Janse (Clerk of the House of Commons): I think it's in the note.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Can I ask one more question I forgot to ask in my notes?

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I think I see in your note that delegates will assume the cost of their air travel and accommodation, but the budget that is before us includes over \$1 million for transportation and accommodation.

Is that correct?

Alexandra Mendès: Jeremy can explain that one.

Jeremy LeBlanc: I think it's somewhat mislabelled in the note that you have.

That \$1.1 million is the cost of the facilities, the cost of the AV/IT, the cost of rentals and the cost of things that we require for the conference. There's a small amount for accommodation because, among the modalities for hosting a CPC, the host branch pays for members of the executive committee. That's part of the deal when you host a conference, and Canada's fees are paid when Canadian executive members go abroad.

However, the bulk of that money really has to do with the facilities for the conference itself. Ground transportation would be included in that—shuttles back and forth from the airport and that sort of thing. The bulk of the money is really for the venue and the AV/IT.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: The question is this: Do we approve it under the proviso that an effort will be made to find the funds internally? For what cannot be found internally, correct me if I'm wrong, but we would request supplementary funds in the supplementary estimates. There will be an effort to find the money internally, and what can't be found would be included in a submission for supplementary funds to the House.

I'm not seeing any objections to going forward with this. Yes, we're pleased to provide that approval.

Alexandra Mendès: Thank you very much.

It is much appreciated.

Now I'll go flying to the chair.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We'll go back to number 3, which is the LTVP working group update from Mr. Kmiec, Mr. Dicaire and Ms. Garrett.

Tom Kmiec: May I begin, Speaker?

As the chair of the LTVP working group, I'm here to provide an update to the board on the progress of the Centre Block rehabilitation program and related long-term vision and plan projects.

The working group is seeking the board's endorsement on several items.

The working group has two recommendations for the board. First, endorse the revised swing space strategy, including the temporary allocation of 15 parliamentary office units in East Block and 19 parliamentary office units in block 2 of the east tower to accommodate members of Parliament displaced during the rehabilitation of the Confederation Building. Second, endorse the parliamentary parking mitigation strategy, which will be discussed in greater detail in camera.

[Translation]

We would like to remind members that in October 2025, the Board of Internal Economy approved the use of the east tower of Block 2 as temporary space for the 34 parliamentary offices needed during the renovation period.

Following this decision, some senators expressed concern about the long-term use of Senate offices in the east tower of Block 2. These concerns were raised in the Senate Subcommittee on the LRPV. Senator Tannas, the subcommittee chair, was the one who raised them. Senator Housakos also expressed similar concerns. I have since had extensive discussions with Senator Tannas to find a solution. I also congratulated him on proposing this solution.

Following these discussions, the proposal regarding temporary parliamentary office space was revised. Nineteen parliamentary offices would be temporarily located in the east tower of Block 2, and 15 parliamentary offices would be located on the third floor of the East Block.

The members of the working group supported this proposal, viewing it as a reasonable compromise that ensures all necessary temporary office space remains within the Parliamentary Precinct and allows members who are being relocated to remain in close proximity to Centre Block and West Block.

We were also informed that, during the renovation of the East Block, measures would continue to be taken to ensure that it remains functional throughout the extended period of occupancy.

We support the revised strategy regarding temporary offices and recommend that the Board of Internal Economy approve it.

• (1135)

[English]

At this point, Speaker, I would ask that the board move in camera to discuss the parliamentary parking mitigation strategy.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. We'll go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• (1135)

(Pause)

• (1230)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're now moving on to the funding increase for parliamentary associations.

Mr. Kmiec, the floor is yours.

Tom Kmiec: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

In my capacity as co-chair of the Joint Interparliamentary Council, I'm appearing today to seek on behalf of the council the approval of the Board of Internal Economy for an increase to the council's budget envelope for the 2026-27 fiscal year and for subsequent fiscal years.

[Translation]

Allow me to first briefly provide some context.

Canada currently has 13 parliamentary associations that play a role in representing the Parliament of Canada internationally. To fully carry out this mandate, these associations should have adequate resources to enable them to participate in key meetings, make

our voice heard and exert meaningful influence, while continuing their work in parliamentary diplomacy.

However, following the 2026-27 budget allocation exercise, many association chairs and members expressed strong concerns that current budgets are insufficient. They indicated that this situation has already resulted in a reduction of activities and in the number of delegates.

• (1235)

[English]

The council believes several factors support the request being presented. The council's budget envelope, set at \$4.3 million, has remained unchanged since 2017-18. During this time, the contributions required to participate in multilateral forums, such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, have increased significantly, rising from \$1.39 million to nearly \$2 million. As these contributions are drawn from the council's envelope, this increase directly reduces the funds available for association activities.

It's also important to highlight the impact of cumulative inflation of approximately 24% since 2017-18, which has significantly reduced the real value of the budget envelope. If an indexing mechanism similar to the one applied to several other parliamentary budgets had been in place, the JIC envelope would now exceed \$5.3 million. The gap between this amount and the current budget clearly illustrates an erosion of financial capacity and explains the pressures observed today.

On behalf of the council, I therefore submit two recommendations to address these issues.

First, the council is requesting a permanent increase of \$628,250, an amount that reflects the growth in international contributions since the last increase nine years ago. Based on the established thirty-seventy ratio, the House of Commons' share would amount to \$439,775.

Second, to prevent this situation from recurring in the coming years, the council recommends an annual adjustment to its overall budget envelope, beginning in 2027-28, based on the consumer price index. This would reflect the approach adopted to mitigate the impact of inflation on other parliamentary budgets.

[Translation]

For your information, the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration of the Senate recently approved these recommendations, subject to the approval of the Board of Internal Economy.

I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

[English]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Chief Government Whip):

My question is for Mr. Kmiec.

For the benefit of those who might be watching this, can you give us some examples of or talk a bit about the importance of this work in terms of parliamentarians fulfilling their functions and what the benefit is to Canadians of members doing this work?

Tom Kmiec: I'll say this very broadly. Members travel in these different associations. They meet parliamentarians and elected officials from other countries. They build ties with them. They build connections with them. Some of that is useful to both the government and Parliament in the long term. Those relationships then serve to inform them on legislation, amendments and ideas to put forward.

I've been part of different non-parliamentary groups thanks to those connections that are built through these parliamentary associations. These bonds are important in the longer term as you're building legislation, as well as a coalition of partners in other countries, when you're trying to put forth legislative consistency across, say, our western alliances.

It matters. It makes a difference.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are there any other comments?

Are we agreed to approve this request?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're moving on to the fifth item on the agenda, the use of the travel point system for travel to the United States.

Mr. Kmiec, the floor is yours.

Tom Kmiec: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the Joint Interparliamentary Council also respectfully request that you consider an amendment to the policies related to the use of travel points for travel to the United States.

[English]

In the current geopolitical and economic context, parliamentarians play an important role in maintaining dialogue with the U.S.'s elected officials. This work is essential to advancing Canada's interests, which is why the council is asking you to consider the following two recommendations.

First, the board should authorize the use of travel points for travel to the United States for parliamentary association activities, which is not currently permitted, as well as for senators' and members' parliamentary functions, including participation at regional meetings. In this regard, it should be specified that the use of travel points for association activities would be permitted only when an MP is a member of an association undertaking the travel and is part of the official delegation approved by the whips. An MP wishing to join an official delegation as an observer would be required to obtain prior approval from the executive committee of the relevant association. This approach would ensure the continued application of the principles of proportionality within official delegations.

The recommendation also provides for expanding the use of travel points in relation to parliamentary functions not associated with association activities. However, it should be noted that this aspect

of the recommendation does not fall within the council's mandate. Consequently, it would be incumbent upon members of the Board of Internal Economy to examine this matter in greater detail in order to establish appropriate guidelines.

[Translation]

The second recommendation is to expand the use of travel points to include travel to the 11 continental United States cities where Canada has a consulate general, in addition to New York and Washington. These cities are Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle.

Please note that the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration of the Senate recently considered these recommendations and proposed that the administration prepare a submission reflecting the required amendments to the Senators' Office Management Policy, as well as develop an estimate of travel-related budget requirements for the 2027-28 fiscal year, for consideration by the committee at a future meeting.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

● (1240)

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

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Kmiec, for your presentations.

We have just approved an increase to the associations' budgets, because they hadn't been indexed since 2017. Of course, I don't think that's inappropriate in the current context.

We're talking about the United States, our main trading partner. No matter how hard we work to diversify our markets worldwide, it will always remain an important partner. The current circumstances are extremely difficult, because there has been a change in the country's leadership. Everyone knows the man in question. I won't go into details, but that's making our lives more complicated. The way we, as parliamentarians, can counter or address this is to establish solid relationships in advance so that we have regular contact with people who live on the other side of the border. That way we can represent our businesses, the interests of our regions and those of all parts of Canada.

I think that allowing us more leeway with our travel to our main trading partner is a very interesting thing. I don't have the data for Canada as a whole, but for Quebec, it's 85%. That's huge, and the impacts of the current situation are being felt. I'm therefore in favour of the proposal.

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

[English]

Chris Warkentin (Chief Opposition Whip):

Thank you.

Right now, the rule states that members determine what they're going to do in Washington, but I believe for New York, it has to be in conjunction with a United Nations event.

What were the provisions that you were stipulating would be required for people to fly to these jurisdictions? Would it be connections with the consulate or working with the consulate or something else? What were the specific provisions that would be required?

Tom Kmiec: If there is a consulate in those cities, members would be able to travel. If there's a parliamentary association-designated meeting there, they would still need to be a member of the association in order to use the points. If they wanted to join the delegation as an observer, they would still need to get the whip's approval.

There are conditions in there to make sure that this is not being misused.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're saying you could travel to any of those cities that have consulates, as long as it's on association business.

Tom Kmiec: That is what the JIC is asking, yes.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are we good?

Mr. Warkentin.

Chris Warkentin: I think I misunderstood that originally. I thought this was for connections with the consulate, but now I'm being told this is only in circumstances when people are attending parliamentary association functions. I'm probably confused.

There are two things. Run through it again.

Tom Kmiec: I'll run through it again.

There are two different recommendations. The first one is for travel to the United States when there's parliamentary travel with an association. The member would have to be a member of the association undertaking the travel. They would have to still seek the whip's approval as part of the official delegation. If an MP wanted to join the official delegation as an observer, they would still be required to get prior approval to join through the executive committee of that parliamentary association.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Excuse me, Mr. Kmiec. I'll interrupt you.

Is it to any city in the United States, if it's with the parliamentary...?

Tom Kmiec: No.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is it only the ones with consulates?

Tom Kmiec: Yes.

The second recommendation would be just to broaden the number of cities in the United States, where a parliamentarian from Canada could travel to, to those where there's a consul general.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*] without a parliamentary activity.

• (1245)

Tom Kmiec: That's correct, yes. That's why there are two recommendations. You can pick and choose your own advantage here—

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: In both cases, though, it's only to cities where we have consulates.

Tom Kmiec: Yes, and you obviously would still need parliamentary activities in order to be there.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, okay.

Does that clarify it, Mr. Warkentin?

Tom Kmiec: You have all the power, Chris.

Chris Warkentin: Apparently. Thank you.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do we agree with both? Okay. Thank you.

We'll go to number 10, which is on the 2025-26 annual financial report and request for approval of budget carry-forward to 2026-27, with Mr. St George, Madam Côté, Ms. Wilson, Mr. Clayton and Ms. Grubestic.

Go ahead, Mr. St George. The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm here today to present the House of Commons annual financial report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026. This includes the financial statements audited by KPMG. I am also asking the Board of Internal Economy to authorize the carry-forward of funds from the operating budget.

In terms of financial statements, the budget totals \$807.9 million. This amount includes approved authorities of \$684.3 million, as well as statutory adjustments, services received free of charge and other adjustments in line with Canadian accounting standards for the public service.

As at March 31, expenditures totalled \$782.5 million, leaving a surplus of \$25.4 million. This is mainly due to a decrease in members' budgetary expenditures during the election period and delays in capital projects related to facilities.

[*English*]

Mr. Clayton, KPMG audit partner, will now present their audit findings.

Rob Clayton (Audit Partner, KPMG): Thank you for the opportunity to present our audit opinion on the 2026 financial statements and to provide a brief summary of the conduct of the audit.

I'd like to introduce my colleague, Ines Grubestic, audit manager for the audit.

The chief financial officer has presented the 2026 financial statements, which management has prepared using public sector accounting standards. These public sector accounting standards are used by all governments in Canada and are issued by the Public Sector Accounting Board.

KPMG was appointed through a competitive process as the independent auditor of the House of Commons for a term beginning in 2024 and ending in the current year. Our role as your independent auditor is to obtain reasonable assurance on whether these financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement.

The 2026 financial statement audit began with the development of our audit plan, which was based on multiple discussions with management. Our year-end audit was executed in accordance with that plan.

During our audit, we received full participation from your House administration. All of our questions were answered. All of the required documentation was received, and all issues were satisfactorily resolved.

We have completed our audit, and we issued our audit opinion on June 1, 2026, in our independent auditor's report. The opinion states that the "financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the House of Commons as at March 31, 2026, and its results of operation, its accumulated surplus and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards."

This is the fourth straight year that the audited financial statements were published in early June. I want to commend the House administration for implementing the ongoing financial reporting processes required to achieve this date.

I also thank the board for scheduling this presentation prior to summer recess and during a very busy legislative agenda.

I will now pass it back to the CFO.

Paul St George: Thank you, Mr. Clayton.

With the board's approval, the House of Commons is also permitted to carry forward up to 5% of its voted main estimates. For 2025-26 the maximum carryforward amount is \$23.4 million. While the reported year-end surplus is \$25.4 million, the amount eligible for carryforward is capped at the 5% limit.

The carryforward is first allocated to the budgets of members and House officers in accordance with the MAS, with the remaining amount allocated to the administration to support members, House operations, compliance requirements and unfunded pressures. Some of these items include the transformation of parliamentary proceedings, a committee witness experience project, the strategic internal assessment of operations and client experience-related activities, constituency office technology and the accessibility plan.

The administration is therefore seeking the board's approval to include a carryforward of \$23.4 million in the supplementary estimates for 2026-27.

This concludes our presentation.

• (1250)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do we agree with the carryforward?

[Translation]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron: Mr. Scarpaleggia, I have a follow-up question, if I may.

Mr. St George, I approve the request, so don't worry. That's fine. When it's possible to carry forward 5% of funds, it means that things have been done rigorously. We're generally in a "financial

streamlining" operation. I know that the budgets aren't necessarily the same, sometimes, but I'm talking about the resources spent on fundamental things, such as interpretation services. I know I'm tire-some when it comes to that.

We all know how budgets work in the public service, in the departments: If funds are unused, the budgets are sometimes reduced the following year. We don't want to see departments rushing to replace furniture because it's the end of the fiscal year and if they don't spend their money, they won't have it the following year. You all understand what I'm talking about.

First, I'd like to congratulate you on your sound financial management, since you still have more than 5% of the funds that were allocated to you. However, in terms of the surplus of the surplus, the surplus that you can't carry forward, where is it going to go?

You're probably going to tell me that this is impossible, but I still want to ask you the question here. Could we consider, one day, the possibility of retaining more than 5% of the funds, as a way to encourage sound financial management, give the House more flexibility in the future and reduce the pressure related to the cuts that are being requested?

Paul St George: Thank you for your question.

The answer is yes. Treasury Board's established limit is 5%, but the Board of Internal Economy can request to carry forward the \$2 million in addition to carrying forward the \$23 million to the next year.

Yves Perron: I'm a bit surprised by your answer. I didn't think you would give me that answer. I would like to know what my colleagues think.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Does anyone else want to speak?

Yves Perron: There doesn't seem to be an immediate reaction from my colleagues.

[English]

An hon. member: Let us think about it.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: I take it that my colleagues want to take the time to analyze the answer we got, because I think they're surprised as well. However, it's interesting to know that it's possible. We can deal with that later.

Eric Janse (Clerk of the House of Commons, House of Commons): That request would be made separately from the one about carrying forward funds, right? It would be a completely different procedure.

Can you give us more details, Mr. St George?

Paul St George: It would mean making a request to carry forward the 5% surplus and, at the same time, making an additional request to carry forward the \$2 million. We have checked.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Wait, I need a moment to fully understand what we're talking about.

If I understand correctly, there's a surplus of \$2 million, and it would be possible to request to keep those funds. I'm surprised, too, Mr. Perron.

That said, is there agreement to approve the carry-forward of funds?

Yves Perron: I'd like to add one last little thing about this, just to make sure it's clear.

I don't want to seem like the guy who wants us to spend millions of dollars and keep it all in our pockets. However, particularly since becoming whip, I'm well aware of all the efforts made by the House administration to ensure effective management, as well as the pressure on each of the structures. I'm coming to the end of the year and I see that the administration has done very well, since it has kept more than the 5% surplus that it can carry forward. I'm missing part of the answer in that regard, Mr. St George.

If those \$2 million aren't going to be used, where are they going to go? Couldn't they be used next year to ease some of the pressure on the organization and enable a better pace for streamlining?

That's all I want to know. It's well intentioned. Perhaps we don't have enough time today to fully analyze the issue, but the goal is to be efficient and not waste public funds.

In short, where will this money go? If it's sent elsewhere to be spent, that's unfortunate, because the people in the administration have been rigorous and have worked hard, but they won't reap the benefits.

• (1255)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm not sure that's part of the issue we have to look at.

I'll ask the first question: Is there approval for the 5% carry-forward of funds?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: The second question concerns the \$2 million surplus. We're asking to keep it, right?

Yves Perron: Mr. Chair, I will go back to my first question, since there was an answer I didn't get.

If we don't keep that amount, where will it go?

Paul St George: It will go into the consolidated fund.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do we let these funds go back into the consolidated fund? We hadn't really discussed it, but that's standard practice, isn't it?

Yves Perron: Yes, that's standard practice. The only point I was raising is that carrying the funds forward to next year might give House administrators, who have been very efficient, more flexibility. That said, I'm not opposed to a carry-forward. The reason I ask is that the issue of year-end spending in a number of departments has been troubling me for many years. That's what I don't want to see.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I see the logic behind what you're proposing in terms of the \$2 million, but apparently it would be unusual to do that.

Shall we decide to stick with standard practice? We can do it for this year, and we'll see what we do next year.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's perfect.

[English]

As is standard practice, I propose that we now move in camera for a brief discussion with the external auditors on the year-end statements, without the presence of House administration officials.

Before doing so, as we will have new auditors next year, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to KPMG for their dedicated service and valued partnership over the years.

Thank you very much.

We'll go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• (1255)

(Pause)

• (1300)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're back.

We'll go to item number 7, Mr. Dicaire.

To save a little time, maybe we could shorten the opening remarks and get straight to the essence.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: I did review this. I'll say that I'm very interested in this, because I think it's necessary.

I understand that as part of the new systems that we will integrate when we move into Centre Block we're extending basically what is the function of the bells to also be on mobile devices. I think that is very important, given the fact that when the bells were originally established, it was centuries ago and people operated and worked differently. Given the fact that work environments are changing, I applaud you guys for looking for ways to advance the notification system for votes.

You have the two recommendations. Option one is online SMS texting when a vote occurs. Option two is the new mobile application. I understand the timelines that are involved in those.

My recommendation would be that we advance, as much as you can, to bring on the new application on devices, because it will be implemented eventually anyway, but in the interim, to add on another channel of delivery. Right now, we have the bells, the emails and Wickr. Another channel of delivery would be SMS texting to numbers that are provided to the House for that.

That's how I would recommend we proceed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Would we keep working on an app?

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: We'd keep working on that in the time-lines that can permit that to occur.

[Translation]

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

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have no objection to exploring options to find a better app. I imagine it would replace Wickr. Otherwise, at some point, we'll end up with 28 of them. That's kind of what worries me. Our devices are becoming increasingly secure, and the login processes can sometimes be tedious and repetitive. If we add a text messaging system—based on my understanding of the document—it would cause security issues, which would require us to ramp up security even further.

Do we really need to add text messaging during this interim period while the House is working on fine-tuning the app that will ultimately replace Wickr and be more effective?

We already have several tools, including Wickr, the call bell, the lobby staff and the whip teams, to contact members.

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

Benoit Dicaire: Mr. Perron, that's an excellent question.

It's up to the Board of Internal Economy to choose which recommendation will be implemented. Text messages are generally not secure. That's why we would take measures to enhance security in such a context. It's up to the Board of Internal Economy to choose between the first and second options, or even decide on a combination of the two.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Gerretsen, the floor is yours.

[English]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Just so that I understand correctly, the text messaging is completely separate from the voting application. Is that correct? All it's doing is notifying people of a vote. It's no different from seeing the light go off or seeing the countdown on CPAC. It doesn't matter who receives that, in theory, because it's just a notification. It's not connected to the voting system. Is that correct?

• (1305)

Benoit Dicaire: That is correct, sir.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: I understand that, Mr. Gerretsen, but what difference does it make? What does it bring compared to Wickr, which we already have?

We already have something like that. Plus, we have our own internal system. There's the call bell and emails. I understand that this is separate from the voting app, and I agree that we should work on an app that would be more efficient, but you'll have to convince me. We're going to launch another project and devote House resources to it; there will be security challenges and there's a risk it will slow down our devices even further.

[English]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: I can say what I think the added benefit is. Wickr is unique to the members only and text messages can be more broadly distributed. Staff can receive those as well. Anybody could, in theory, receive those, because it's just a simple text message that says that a vote is happening now. I see it as completely different from Wickr. I look at Wickr as something that is very secure, for members only, whereas a text message is similar to the bells going off or CPAC saying that a vote is happening now. I think the benefit to this is that then there will be more staff who are receiving the notifications. I think it's important to appreciate that when votes are happening—quite often or sometimes without any anticipation of them—members become aware of them.

A hundred years ago when we started using the bell system, people were always around here. They were always on the Hill. They were in their offices. They were always somewhere where they would see that bell start flashing. The reality is that the way the system works now, people don't necessarily have to be here. I think it's incumbent upon us to ensure that we look for new ways to promote the fact that a vote is happening so that people become notified of it. If that means making sure that all staff members also become aware of it, I look at it as a more secure way to keep staff away from the security stuff, which is Wickr.

[Translation]

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

Yves Perron: This might be a safe way to postpone the election. I'm just kidding. I'll go along with my colleagues. All I'm saying is that, if we do this and it works well, we may not need to develop a new app.

Can we take it step by step, start with that and see what happens?

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do we agree to proceed step by step? We would start by setting up the text messaging service and, if necessary, we will examine the issue of the app.

[English]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: I think we can do that. We'll start with the one and talk about the application later.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We'll see how it goes.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I have two other items that shouldn't take a lot of time.

Item 8 is approval of the 2025-26 annual report on committee activities, and item 9 is the "Report to Canadians 2026".

Are we good?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: Mr. Chair, there's just one thing I want to point out about the report we'll be sending to the Canadian public. It's important to note that the information on the composition of the standing House committees is incorrect, because the composition has changed. The ruling party unilaterally decided to change the composition of the committees without consulting, among others, members of the Bloc Québécois. We are therefore providing the public with outdated information. This bothered me, so I asked an informal question about it. I was told that this annual report covered the period ending March 31 and that the information would be included in next year's report. That's fine with me, but at least I will have said so in public.

I move that we add an appendix noting that changes were made to the composition of the committees on certain dates and that the current situation is different. I think this would provide the public with more accurate information. Otherwise, they'll be misinformed for a year. I'm willing to believe that things don't always move quickly in the public service, but do you understand my point?

• (1310)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, I understand.

We could add a footnote to say that there have been changes since then.

Yves Perron: If my colleagues agree, that would be great. It would demonstrate transparency.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, that's a good idea.

We can't list the date of every change. Actually, it's possible, but it might not be advisable, since there are changes almost every week.

Yves Perron: Mr. Gerretson won't agree with the word "unilaterally" but he will agree with the rest of the information.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Agreed. We're going to add a footnote stating that this is not the current composition.

Both reports are therefore approved. However, before adjourning the meeting, I'd like to give the floor to Mr. Bédard.

[English]

Michel Bédard: I'd like to go back to the decision that was taken in relation to travel points, in order to clarify the BOIE's decision.

Travel points are dealt with in the Members By-law. That will require an amendment. We will bring the bylaw amendments for pro forma approval to the next meeting. Right now, the current regime is that there are four points that can be used for Washington, and members can use two of those points for New York, provided that it's for United Nations activities.

I would like some clarification on the BOIE decision.

Do you want those four points to be used everywhere there's a consulate, or just use the two points for New York and cities where there's a consulate?

[Translation]

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

Yves Perron: Mr. Gerretson may speak before me.

[English]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Kmiec was asking for the first thing you said.

Is that correct?

Michel Bédard: My understanding is that the decision was very broad. I just want to confirm this with the BOIE, because I don't think the number of points was discussed. It's about whether the decision was on the four points.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Yes, I think that's what they were asking for.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: As I understand it, Mr. Chair, the proposal is to expand the travel points system so that points can be used to travel to the United States for regional meetings, parliamentary committee activities or other activities that warrant such travel. Furthermore, if I understand correctly, this must also be approved by the whips, which would ensure a certain degree of oversight.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: The other thing is that there's no consulate in Washington.

Michel Bédard: The city of Washington is already covered by the Members By-law. So the four points can be used to travel to Washington.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is there a limit on the number of points one can use to travel to cities where there is a consulate?

Michel Bédard: That's what we're talking about.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Yves Perron: Mr. Chair, the limiting factor, based on my understanding of Mr. Kmiec's presentation, is that there must be a relevant event. Travel must take place in relation to parliamentary association activities or parliamentary functions. For example, this could be an elected official attending a regional meeting.

Is that your understanding, Mr. Bédard?

Michel Bédard: If I understood correctly, these would be the four points. I know there were two parts to the recommendation. First, it involves allowing the use of these travel points for association-related travel. Second, it involves allowing members of Parliament to travel in relation to their parliamentary functions to a U.S. city where there is a consulate.

What I wanted to clarify with the Board of Internal Economy is whether this involves two points, as is the case for New York, or four points.

Yves Perron: I understood that the four points remained in effect, but I may not have understood correctly.

[*English*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Warkentin.

Chris Warkentin: I'm not sure how I understood it, but I would propose that it be eligible for the two points. There would be four eligible to go to Washington, but then two could be extended for the possibility of New York or the new list of cities.

Let's see how that works, and then we'll go from there.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron: The idea is to keep the maximum of four points. For the rest, there would be some flexibility.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you for raising that point.

Are we in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's perfect.

The meeting is adjourned.

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