



MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

OTTAWA, Thursday, June 6, 2024
(36)

[English]

The Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration met this day at 9:00 a.m., in room C128, Senate of Canada Building, the chair, the Honourable Lucie Moncion, presiding.

Members of the committee present: The Honourable Senators Boehm, Boyer, Carignan, P.C., Dalphond, Forest, LaBoucane-Benson, Loffreda, MacAdam, MacDonald, Moncion, Plett, Quinn, Saint-Germain, Seidman, Smith, and Tannas (16).

Other senator present: The Honourable Senator Oudar (1).

Participating in the meeting: Pascale Legault, Chief Corporate Services Officer and Clerk of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration; Shaila Anwar, Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments; Gérald Lafrenière, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Services; Philippe Hallée, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel; senior Senate officials and other support staff.

WITNESSES:

The Honourable Senator Éric Forest, Chair, Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets;

The Honourable Senator Scott Tannas, Chair, Subcommittee on Long Term Vision and Plan;

Josée Labelle, Director General, Property and Services Directorate;

Mélisa Leclerc, Director General, Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate;

David Vatcher, Director, Information Services Directorate.

Pursuant to rule 12-7(1) of the *Rules of the Senate*, the committee continued its consideration of financial and administrative matters concerning the Senate's internal administration.

The chair made a statement.

The senators introduced themselves.

CIBA/2024-06-06/396(P) — Consent Agenda

The chair made a statement regarding the consent agenda.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Dalphond moved that the consent agenda, which is comprised of the following items, be adopted:

- Minutes of Proceedings from May 23, 2024 (In Public);
- Minutes of Proceedings from May 23, 2024 (In Camera);
- Request for Proposal — Vehicle Insurance;
- Report from the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

CIBA/2024-06-06/397(P) — Report from the Subcommittee on the Long-Term Vision and Plan

The chair of the Subcommittee on the Long-Term Vision and Plan, the Honourable Senator Tannas, presented the subcommittee's Tenth Report as follows:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Subcommittee on the Long-Term Vision and Plan of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

TENTH REPORT

Your subcommittee, which was authorized by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA) to study and report on the program of work for the Long-Term Vision and Plan for the parliamentary precinct, now presents its tenth report with the following recommendations.

Triad Material Handling Facility

Your subcommittee met with officials from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) on May 29, 2024, at which time PSPC provided an update on the Triad Material Handling Facility Project that will support East Block, Centre Block, West Block and the Parliament Welcome Centre (PWC) and sought direction on the Senate's requirements.

Recommendation 1:

Your subcommittee recommends to CIBA that it advise PSPC to proceed with the Senate's refined program requirements for the Triad Material Handling Facility with the following caveats:

1. That PSPC accommodate approximately 258m² of previously displaced programs for the Senate from Centre Block project back to in the Parliament Welcome Centre (PWC). If these functions cannot be accommodated in PWC, they must be reincorporated into the functional program for the Triad Material Handling Facility along with any support spaces that are required to facilitate for the proper flow of people and goods;

2. Given that the feasibility study to validate the reduction to three (3) loading docks for the Triad Material Handling is not yet analysed and completed, the parliamentary partners' requirement for at least four (4) loading docks at the Triad Material Handling remains; and
3. That PSPC report back to the subcommittee in Fall 2024 to confirm that the design and evaluation of the Material Handling Facility meet the Senate's requirements.

Centre Block Parliamentary Office Unit Strategy (POUs)

Senate Administration officials also provided the subcommittee with an update on future planning considerations for a senators' parliamentary office unit (POUs) in the Centre Block, the Senate Office Complex, and eventually East Block. The subcommittee was told that the future planning considerations will inform the detailed design development phase for the POUs, and be based on flexibility, required infrastructure, comfort, virtual presence, sensitivity to heritage, and furniture. It is expected that there will be a move towards a paperless environment, multifunctional, ergonomic furniture, and a focus on sustainable materials that do not emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Recommendation 2:

Accordingly, your subcommittee recommends to CIBA that the Senate approve the future planning considerations for senators' parliamentary office units (POUs) in order to proceed with the design development of the modernized POU strategy, and to advance the development of the furniture strategy contained within the POUs.

Finally, your subcommittee recommends that it be authorized to communicate these recommendations to Public Services and Procurement Canada, on CIBA's behalf.

Respectfully submitted,

SCOTT TANNAS
Chair of the subcommittee

The Honourable Senator Tannas made a statement regarding the Tenth Report.

The Honourable Senator Tannas moved that the Tenth Report be adopted and that the chair of the subcommittee be authorized to communicate the recommendations to Public Services and Procurement Canada, on CIBA's behalf.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

CIBA/2024-06-06/398(P) — Reports from the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets — Committee Budget Requests for AEFA and APPA

The chair of the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets, the Honourable Senator Forest, presented the Thirtieth Report of the subcommittee as follows:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

THIRTIETH REPORT

Your subcommittee met on March 31, 2024, the chair, the Honourable Senator Éric Forest, presiding, to consider two budget requests for the 2024-2025 fiscal year as follows:

1. Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA)

(Special study on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa)

Activity 1: Addis Ababa	\$265,400
(Ethiopia) - Fall 2024	
TOTAL	\$265,400

(includes a request for funds for a fact-finding mission and for 7 senators to travel and an exception to the Financial Policy for Senate Committees to bring one senator's staff)

Recommendations

Due to the high costs of travel, your subcommittee recommends the release of funds for four senators to travel, instead of the seven requested, which should include the chair and one representative from each of the three other recognized parties and parliamentary groups. To further reduce costs, your subcommittee also recommends that the request for an exemption from section 1.5.5.50 of the *Financial Policy for Senate Committees*, to allow one Senator's staff to travel outside Canada, be rejected, reducing the number of staff to three, for a total release for this activity of **\$178,300**.

2. Indigenous Peoples (APPA)

(Special study on the constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples)

General Expenses	\$26,850
TOTAL	\$26,850

(includes a request for funds for hospitality, consultants and supplementary transportation and accommodation costs for participants)

Recommendation

Your subcommittee recommends the release of funds for this request, for a total of **\$26,850**.

Summary

For your information, the total funds in the budgetary envelope available for Senate committee budgets for 2024-2025 is **\$2.2 million**, less **\$320,820** for witness expenses, leaving **\$1.882 million** for release to individual committee budgets (not including the Committee on Audit and Oversight). Today's recommended release of **\$205,150** for one committee travel activity and for general expenses, and the **\$207,655** approved earlier this year leaves **\$1,469,195** for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The budgets approved by the Senate for each travel activity are the maximum amount that can be spent for that activity. Your subcommittee encourages both committees to look for reasonable ways to reduce their expenditures.

Typically, committees' actual expenditures are just under 60% of their total budget request. Any funds remaining at the conclusion of a travel activity will be clawed-back and can be made available for allocation to committees for other activities.

Copies of each committee's budget application are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

ÉRIC FOREST
Chair

The Honourable Senator Forest made a statement and answered questions regarding the Thirtieth Report.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Forest moved that the Thirtieth Report be adopted.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted, on division.

CIBA/2024-06-06/399(P) — Reports from the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets — Comparative Analysis of Broadcasting Services

The chair of the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets, the Honourable Senator Forest, presented the Thirty-First Report of the subcommittee as follows:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Subcommittee on the Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA) has the honour to present its

THIRTY-FIRST REPORT

BACKGROUND

On February 8, 2024, CIBA requested a comparative review of available options and associated costs to achieve a level of service equivalent to what the House of Commons provides to the Senate in terms of broadcasting and information technology services. This request came in light of the recent significant increase in costs associated with the broadcasting Service Level Agreement (SLA) that the Senate entered into with the House of Commons.

Your subcommittee met on May 31, 2024, with the Honorable Senator Eric Forest in the chair, to discuss additional information provided by the Communications, Broadcasting and Publications Directorate (COM) and the Information Services Directorate (ISD) regarding this request.

The SLA covers the broadcasting of all Chamber sittings, committee meetings and parliamentary events organized by the Speaker of the Senate and COM.

ANALYSIS

Your subcommittee was informed that the 56.2% increase in costs is mainly attributable to a more equitable cost analysis made by the new management team at the House of Commons, a reorganization of the workforce (to address recruitment and retention issues) and inflation.

Your subcommittee was also informed of the many advantages of using the House of Commons as a service provider (e.g., easy adjustments to the unpredictable Senate and committee schedules; coordination of staffing efforts; sharing with the Senate of multiple infrastructures/equipment that would be costly to replace; sharing of costs associated with ParlVU).

Your subcommittee has also taken note of the risks associated with the use of an external supplier, and the additional costs this could generate. Consequently, your subcommittee is satisfied with the additional information provided and considers that a comparative cost analysis is no longer necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the additional information on the services provided to the Senate under the Service Level Agreement with the House of Commons and the benefits it represents, it is recommended that a comparative cost analysis not be carried out, given the highly predictable conclusions and the considerable resources such an exercise would require.

Respectfully submitted,

ÉRIC FOREST

Chair

The Honourable Senator Forest made a statement regarding the Thirty-First Report.

The Honourable Senator Forest moved that the Thirty-First Report be adopted.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

CIBA/2024-06-06/400(P) — Reports from the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets — Efficiency Measure for Telephone Lines

The chair of the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets, the Honourable Senator Forest, presented the Thirty-Second Report of the subcommittee as follows:

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets (SEBS) of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA) has the honour to present its

THIRTY-SECOND REPORT

On December 15, 2022, your subcommittee was mandated by CIBA to conduct an efficiency review of the activities and services provided by the Senate Administration. As part of this review, the Administration submitted 32 proposals for savings opportunities to the subcommittee. Your subcommittee requested that 28 of these 32 savings opportunities be further analyzed, as outlined in Appendix 1 of your subcommittee's eighteenth report, presented to CIBA on June 15, 2023. Your subcommittee met on May 31, the chair, the Honourable Senator Éric Forest presiding, and considered the following initiative, proposed by the Information Services Directorate (ISD), to optimize the number of landlines in senators' offices.

BACKGROUND

In the past, ISD provided landlines to all Senate users as part of its service offering. They were considered a central, essential tool for all senators and their staff, and enabled all Canadians to communicate with their Senators via a centralized line.

A “Cut the cord” exercise was completed in 2020-21 to reduce the number of landlines and fax machines. Out of 445 lines, 258 lines were eliminated in the Administration (58% decrease) and out of 424 lines, 106 lines were eliminated in senators' offices (25% decrease).

Services offered to senators' offices are defined in the *Senator's Office Management Policy* (SOMP) and the Senators' Office Expense Index, where it is indicated that every senator and staff member may receive landlines paid for by the central funding for their parliamentary precinct offices, without specifying a limit. The SOMP also has provisions for Satellite phones and plans, as well as the TeleCanada calling card, which are no longer used in the Senate.

ANALYSIS

The number of landlines in senators' offices is often directly proportional to the number of staff hired in those offices. While some senators have one or two full-time staff, other senators choose to hire part-time staff, students, interns or have volunteers working for them, sometimes creating the need for a greater number of landlines. The number of landlines per senator's office, excluding House Officers' offices, varies from 0 to 7.

Aside from short-term staff and students, senators' staff are provided with a Senate-issued mobile phone, reducing the need for physical landlines. A growing number of staff and senators are also using the Microsoft Teams Application to make and receive secured, encrypted audio or video calls.

Overall, there are currently 271 landlines distributed in senators' offices, for an average of 2 landlines per office. The overall landline annual expense for senators' and House Officers' offices represents approximately \$100,000. To reduce costs to the Senate, your subcommittee proposes to limit the number of landlines attributed to senators' offices to a maximum of two (2) lines, including the offices of House Officers. With the current distribution, this initiative would represent a reduction of 96 landlines, for an estimated annual saving of \$34,560.

TeleCanada Calling Card and Satellite Phone Plans

As the TeleCanada Calling Card and the Satellite Phone are services no longer offered by the Senate, ISD proposes to remove these provisions from the SOMP Expense Index to reflect the current service offering.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above, your subcommittee recommends:

That the number of landlines be limited to a maximum of two (2) lines per senator's office, including the offices of House Officers;

That the number of landlines per office be reduced as of October 1, 2024;

That a communiqué be sent to inform senators of this decision, if applicable;

That the Senators' Office Expense Index be modified to reflect the changes; and

That TeleCanada calling cards and Satellite Phones Plans be removed from the Senators' Office Expense Index as they are no longer used.

Respectfully submitted,

ÉRIC FOREST
Chair

The Honourable Senator Forest made a statement and, together with David Vatcher, answered questions regarding the Thirty-Second Report.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Forest moved that the Thirty-Second be adopted.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

At 9:57 a.m., the committee suspended.

At 9:59 a.m., pursuant to 12-16(1), the committee proceeded in camera.

At 11:04 a.m., the committee adjourned to the call of the chair.

ATTEST:

Pascale Legault

*Chief Corporate Services Officer and Clerk of the Standing Committee on
Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration*

Keli Hogan

Recording Secretary