



MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

OTTAWA, Thursday, December 11, 2025

(8)

[English]

The Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA) met in camera and then proceeded in public, this day at 8:02 a.m., in room C128, Senate of Canada Building, the chair, the Honourable Lucie Moncion, presiding.

Members of the committee present: The Honourable Senators Audette, Boehm, Boyer, Forest, Francis, Henkel, MacAdam, Moncion, Moodie, Moreau, Osler, Oudar, Quinn, Smith, and Tannas (15).

Other senators present: The Honourable Senators Al Zaibak, Black, Duncan, Hays, Loffreda, and McNair (6).

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

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.

WITNESSES:

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

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

The Honourable Senator Pat Duncan;

Isabelle Ricard, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Procurement Directorate;

Nathalie Charpentier, Comptroller and Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Procurement Directorate;

Josée Labelle, Director General, Property and Services Directorate;

Louise Cowley, Director, LTVP & Accommodation, Property and Services Directorate.

At 8:39 a.m., the committee suspended.

At 8:43 a.m., the committee resumed in public.

The chair made a statement.

The senators introduced themselves.

CIBA/2025-12-11/083(P) – Consent Agenda

The chair made a statement regarding the consent agenda.

The Honourable Senator Moreau moved that the consent agenda, which is comprised of the following items, be adopted:

- Minutes of Proceedings from November 27, 2025 (In Public and In Camera);
- Annual Report from the Joint Interparliamentary Council (JIC);
- Membership of the Joint Interparliamentary Council (JIC), that the Honourable Senator Ross replace the Honourable Senator Downe as a Senate Representative on JIC.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/084(P) – Reports from the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets – Committee Budget Request from the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

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

Thursday, December 11, 2025

The Subcommittee on the Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets of the Standing

Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Your subcommittee met on December 2, 2025, the chair, the Honourable Senator Éric Forest, presiding, to consider a budget request of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, as follows:

1. Agriculture and Forestry (AGFO)

(Special study on the role of the agriculture and agri-food sector with regard to food security in Canada)

Activity 1: Gatineau (Quebec)

(Spring 2026) \$ 280

Activity 2: Toronto/Guelph (Ontario)

(Spring 2026) \$ 26,865

TOTAL \$ 27,145

(includes funds for fact-finding mission and for 9 senators to travel)

Your subcommittee supports the purpose and rationale of the request and acknowledges the committee's efforts to identify real savings in order to reduce travel costs as much as possible.

During the budget presentation, your subcommittee received confirmation that all AGFO members who plan to travel as part of the two proposed activities are comfortable with the absence of interpretation services during the trips. However, your subcommittee wishes to reaffirm the importance of respecting official languages and the need to ensure that services are provided in the language of choice of senators.

Your subcommittee therefore recommends the approval of this budget request, provided that it be adjusted to include interpretation services. Your subcommittee would like to remind all honourable senators that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Official Languages Act* declare English and French to be the official languages of Canada and provide that both languages have equality of status and equal rights and privileges respecting their use in all institutions of Parliament. Your subcommittee believes that cost-savings should not come at the expense of constitutional rights related to official languages, particularly with respect to communications with the public and the language of work for all participants. Your subcommittee encourages committees to identify other opportunities for savings in the preparation of their budgets.

Committee Budget Summary

For your information, the total funds in the budgetary envelope available for Senate committee budgets (except for the Committee on Audit and Oversight) for 2025-2026 is **\$2.2 million, less \$320,820** for witness expenses, leaving **\$1.882 million** for release to individual committee budgets.

Today's budget request is the second of this fiscal year.

The budget approved by the Senate for a travel activity reflects the maximum amount that can be spent for that activity. Budgets usually include funds for the full membership of the committee to travel. In general, a reduced delegation travels and efforts are made to find additional savings.

Typically, committees' actual expenditures are closer to 40% 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.

A copy of the committee's budget application is appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

ÉRIC FOREST
Chair

The Honourable Senator Forest made a presentation and advised members that the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has requested an increase to the budget to include interpretation services, for a total of \$34,190.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Forest moved that the subcommittee's Fifth Report, as amended, be adopted.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/085(P) – Reports from the Subcommittee on Senate Estimates and Committee Budgets – Main Estimates 2026-2027

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

Thursday, December 11, 2025

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

SIXTH REPORT

Your subcommittee was mandated by CIBA on June 19, 2025, to examine and report on financial matters, including any proposed estimates, keeping in mind the necessity for the Senate and its Administration to demonstrate responsible management of the public funds that are allocated to the institution.

As part of this mandate, your subcommittee members, consisting of the Honourable Senators Al Zaibak, Carignan, P.C., Forest, Hay and Mohamed, met on October 20, November 17, 18 and 20, and December 2, 2025. Senator Tannas also took part in the December 2, 2025, meeting. During these meetings, they shared their views, which helped clearly define the approach proposed by CIBA at its meeting on October 2, 2025, for establishing the Senate's 2026–27 budget, taking into account the current economic context, the impact of inflation, the federal government's Comprehensive Expenditure Review initiative, the Senate's own financial context, and its funding requirements.

Current Economic Context

In July 2025, the Government of Canada announced a Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER) of federal government programs to ensure spending is responsible, cost-effective and delivers results for Canadians. Federal institutions were asked to bring forward ambitious savings proposals to spend less on the day-to-day running of government by targeting programs and activities that are underperforming, not core to the federal mandate, duplicative, or misaligned with government priorities.

Although a very limited number of organizations and all agents of Parliament, including the Senate, are excluded from this exercise, the government's expenditure review emphasizes the importance of continued efficiency, effectiveness, and prudent financial management across federal institutions. In that spirit, the Senate intends to continue the practice of examining its own spending, exploring opportunities to improve productivity while maintaining the continuity of parliamentary business, including by leveraging new technologies, and managing public resources responsibly for the benefit of Canadians. With this in mind, your subcommittee will begin its program review in the new year, as mandated by CIBA on October 2, 2025, to ensure thorough preparation for 2027-28 Main Estimates review process.

Your subcommittee feels it is important to remember that although Senate expenditures increased by 38% over the past ten fiscal years, inflation rose by 29% during the same period.

This represents a real increase of approximately 9%, keeping the Senate well below the growth observed in other parliamentary institutions (average of 18%) and within the federal public service (76%). Your subcommittee highlights the efficiency review efforts implemented in 2023 by CIBA, which have already resulted in annual savings of approximately \$384,000 and compliance with the full time equivalent (FTE) cap of 449.

The Senate's 2026-27 Budget

Your subcommittee reviewed the funding requirements for the 2026-27 Senate Main Estimates on November 17, 18 and 20, 2025. Members were provided with two documents in support of their discussions: the *Proposed Main Estimates for 2026-27*, and the *2026-27 Directorate Executive Overviews*.

The proposed budget is based on an average of 100 senators during the fiscal year. It takes into account the current economic context and the Senate's operational requirements, while putting forward strategies aimed at limiting financial impacts on the next fiscal year. It is guided by the following three key principles:

- The responsible and efficient allocation of public funds, with savings and internal reallocation of funds where possible, without compromising services;
- The maintenance of the cap on full time equivalent (FTE) positions, accompanied by strategic reallocation of existing resources to areas of need; and
- The investment in priorities identified by senators to support and promote their parliamentary work.

As a result of your subcommittee's review of the budget requests, the Senate's Main Estimates for fiscal 2026-27 are proposed to be \$141,409,806 which represents a 1.5% increase over the 2025-26 budget (see Appendix A). Taking into account your subcommittee's mandate to find savings and internal reallocations where possible, this proposal includes a reallocation of unused funds, a \$2.4 million reduction in funding requests for senators' office budgets, based on a 90% utilization rate, and a reduction in the budget for committee activities, generating an additional savings of \$1.0 million. These two savings result in a budget reduction of \$3.4 million.

This budget includes increases of \$3.0 million corresponding to the rise in non-discretionary statutory expenditures. These include adjustments to senators' allowances and travel expenses, as well as contributions to employee benefits. It should be noted that the annual office budget allocated to each senator for 2026-27 will increase from \$268,405 to \$271,645 due to economic salary increases and inflation (subject to review on April 1, 2026).

The subcommittee wishes to highlight the financial impact associated with rising hotel accommodation costs in the Parliamentary District. One of our primary hotels has confirmed a rate increase of \$25 per night effective April 1, 2026. Given the number of overnight stays

typically required in Ottawa over the course of the parliamentary calendar within a fiscal year, this rate increase results in an estimated annual budget pressure of approximately \$6,000 for senators as their current annual allocation would no longer be sufficient to cover typical travel requirements to Ottawa while staying within the maximum reimbursable hotel amounts. It is therefore recommended to increase the individual annual Living Expenses Budget from \$30,000 to \$36,000. This proposed adjustment does not affect senators acting as House Officers, as defined in the *Senators' Office Management Policy*, but to account for continued cost increase, it is recommended to increase their annual allocation by inflation from \$37,000 to \$38,110. Despite these adjustments, your subcommittee recommends a reduction of \$242,620 to the overall living expenses budget for senators compared to the previous fiscal year, which is made possible by an adjustment based on actual expenditures.

The supplemental office budget for House Officers, caucuses, and recognized parliamentary groups is increased by \$305,129, with the increase targeted in the annual budgets of two House Officers to meet operational needs, followed by a general adjustment applied to the annual allocation for all House Officers based on the inflation rate of 3%. In addition, the office budget for the Speaker of the Senate increases by \$25,900 to reflect the economic increase in salaries, including a parity adjustment of 3.46% and a 3% inflation rate for non-salary expenses.

The increase in budgets for services to senators provided by the Administration includes funds to cover inflation as well as salary economic increases of \$1.6 million for non-represented employees, the Senate executive and middle management group, legal employees in the SLA classification and Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada employees, as well as the reclassification of ten positions at \$141,417. Economic increases in salaries and associated benefits represent 2.5% of the overall budget growth.

This budget includes an increase of \$85,000 for corporate training, an organizational strategic priority. This increase is intended to allow the Senate to augment the individual and collective learning and professional development needs of Administration employees and senators' staff, as well as to fund corporate training programs, based on the equivalent of 1% of the previous fiscal year's actual payroll. This additional investment will also enable the Senate to reach the levels of investment in training per employee generally observed in the industry and will contribute to its efforts to retain staff.

Maintenance and life cycle management activities for multimedia equipment, information technology services provided by the House of Commons, including broadcasting, licences and software shared between the two chambers, as well as a temporary amount for the replacement of multimedia components for Senate committee rooms, will be funded in part by the reallocation of funds from the Senate's anticipated surplus in 2026-27. These investments of

\$1.5 million are intended to support technological change and ensure the seamless operation and continuity of parliamentary business.

In addition, an upgrade of the information technology service management platform is necessary to improve services delivered to senators, employees and the institution, and to better align with industry standards. A permanent budget increase of \$70,000 is planned for licensing, but its implementation will be funded by a reallocation of funds from the Senate's anticipated surplus in 2026-27.

Like other parliamentary institutions, the Senate has adopted an artificial intelligence strategy aimed at improving service efficiency, facilitating access to information and enhancing transparency. As part of the first phase of this digital transformation, certain technology expenditures planned for 2026-27 will be brought forward through the reallocation of \$315,524 from the expected surplus for 2025-26, without requiring additional funding in the 2026-27 Main Estimates. Furthermore, two FTEs from the current workforce will be reallocated to support this strategy, starting in 2026-27.

Finally, your subcommittee expresses concerns about the cost to senators of the Members of Parliament Pension Plan, which results directly from the structure of the plan and the assumed theoretical rate of return on investments, used as the basis for determining the discount rate applied to calculate funding requirements.

Your subcommittee would like to note that over the past five years, the Senate has spent an average of 86% of its annual budget, returning unused funds to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. It therefore recommends using the carry-forward mechanism established by the Treasury Board Secretariat, which allows part of an organization's unused operating budget to be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next. Taking all these factors into account, the overall Senate budget for 2026-27 includes a modest 1.5% increase over the previous fiscal year, or approximately \$2.15 million. The proposed approach for 2026-27 aims to continue prudent resource management without compromising the quality of services provided to senators by reallocating available funds and continuing to maintain the number of FTEs at the cap established in 2023.

Your subcommittee's review of the Senate's Main Estimates for 2026-27 proved particularly challenging this year due to the economic context, the nature of the information required, and the diversity of views expressed by its members. Nevertheless, all members emphasized the importance of balancing the autonomy of senators with the prudent and responsible management of public funds. From this perspective, your subcommittee is actively preparing to undertake the next mandate given to it by CIBA on October 2 to undertake a review of each directorate and the programs of the Senate Administration, in order to continue the practice of

ensuring the effective, prudent and transparent use of Senate resources. The provisions of the voluntary early retirement incentive program through the federal public service pension plan, announced in the 2025 Budget, will also be reviewed as part of this comprehensive review.

Accordingly, following its study of the Senate's Main Estimates for 2026-27, your subcommittee makes the following recommendations:

- That the Senate's Main Estimates for fiscal 2026-27 be \$141,409,806, which corresponds to a modest increase of 1.5%, taking into consideration economic increases in salaries and associated benefits. Excluding these mandatory adjustments, the Senate budget for 2026-27 shows a 1% reduction in the budget compared to the 2025-26 fiscal year;
- That the budget adjustments for 2026-27 listed in Appendices A and B be approved;
- That the Finance Rule set out in the Schedule of the *Senate Administrative Rules* be amended to reflect the increases to the additional office allowance of the Speaker of the Senate and the office budgets for senators;
- That the Administration be authorized to request the carry-forward of funds in the 2026-27 Supplementary Estimates;
- That the amounts and requests for the following competitive or sole-source procurement processes, as well as the initiation of the corresponding expenditures, be approved:
 - replacement of certain multimedia components in the Senate Chamber and designated committee rooms (sole source) for 2025-26;
 - replacement of digital signal processors (sole source) for 2026-27;
 - replacement of PZT cameras (competitive) for 2026-27;
 - IT Service Management (ITSM) platform (competitive) for 2026-27; and
 - digital transformation of Senate transcripts through the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies (competitive) for 2025-26.
- That the daily rate for senator's privately owned accommodation in the Parliamentary District be increased from \$58 to \$60 effective April 1, 2026.
- That the average maximum amount per night for commercial accommodation in the Parliamentary District be increased from \$300 to \$325, effective April 1, 2026.
- That CIBA formally communicate concerns about the structure of the parliamentary pension plan for senators to the Minister of the Treasury Board.
- That the proposed budget strategy be adopted.

Respectfully submitted,

ÉRIC FOREST

Chair

The Honourable Senator Forest made a presentation and, together with Isabelle Ricard, answered questions.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Forest moved that the subcommittee's Sixth Report be adopted.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/086(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 Second Report of the subcommittee as follows:

Thursday, December 11, 2025

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

SECOND REPORT

Your subcommittee, which was authorized by CIBA to supervise all steps, processes and decisions (excluding those areas that are under the authority of the Speaker of the Senate) relating to the program of work for the Long-Term Vision and Plan for the parliamentary precinct, in coordination with the Senate Administration; and examine the best ways to ensure the rehabilitation of Centre Block, East Block and all other buildings that will be occupied by the Senate in the end state respect the heritage and the best interests of the Senate, without compromising the integrity of security, now presents its second report with a recommendation and an update.

1. Moratorium on Moves at Victoria Building

On December 3, 2025, your subcommittee received a presentation from the Senate Administration indicating that the Victoria Building is slated for closure in early 2027 to allow for its full rehabilitation as part of the Long-Term Vision and Plan (LTVP) and a change of occupancy to accommodate the House of Commons in the end state. Senators currently occupying the Victoria Building will be relocated to the Chambers Building, located at 40 Elgin Street, where 45 new Parliamentary Office Units are currently being constructed. These new spaces are expected to be ready for occupancy at the time of the Victoria Building's closure in 2027.

In light of this, your subcommittee proposes the implementation of a moratorium on any new office moves into and within the Victoria Building. The moratorium will help reduce the number of relocations over a relatively short period, enabling the Administration to focus its resources on planning and implementing the smooth transition from the Victoria Building to the Chambers Building. This proactive measure will contribute to a coordinated relocation process,

minimize operational disruptions for occupants, and facilitate the inventory activities required for other components of the rehabilitation project for the Senate Office Complex (Block 2).

Recognizing the Senate's commitment to eliminating barriers to accessibility and to offering a safe and secure working environment, health & safety or approved accommodation requirements would be exempt from this moratorium and actioned, as required, by the Administration.

Recommendation:

In light of the above, your subcommittee recommends:

That a grace period be granted until the end of January 2026 to allow occupants of the Victoria Building to carry out briefcase moves within the building;

That senators who wish to continue to occupy a generic office in the Victoria Building be allowed to do so, with that office being considered their permanent space, along with any associated privileges and limitations;

That, starting February 1, 2026, a moratorium be imposed on any office moves to or within the Victoria Building, except for health and safety and/or approved accommodation exemptions, in order to allow for the efficient allocation of resources in preparation for the building's closure in 2027; and

That a communication plan be developed to inform all occupants of the Victoria Building of the terms and implementation of the moratorium.

2. Natural Light in Offices

In the spring of 2025, a survey related to the LTVP was conducted among senators' staff. The results, along with the feedback received, confirm that access to natural light in offices is an important factor contributing to employee well-being and productivity, and reduces visual fatigue.

On December 3, 2025, your subcommittee was informed that, wherever possible, all senator's offices and Senate Administration offices and workspaces will have access to direct or indirect natural light. In some buildings, however, the configuration of the space does not always allow for the installation of a window directly facing an exterior wall. In these situations, design solutions such as the addition of transoms, sidelights, or clerestory windows may be implemented to ensure an indirect source of natural light.

Your subcommittee acknowledges the ongoing efforts of the Senate Administration to maximize access to natural light in the workplace and to maintain rigorous follow-up on this commitment across all current and future LTVP projects.

Respectfully submitted,

SCOTT TANNAS
Chair

The Honourable Senator Tannas made a presentation.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Tannas moved that the subcommittee's Second Report be adopted.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/087(P) – Senator Duncan – Request for an increase to the Senator's Living Expenses Budget

The Honourable Senator Duncan made a statement and answered questions regarding a request for an exception to increase the Senator's living expenses budget.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Moreau moved that the committee approve the request for an exception by the Honourable Senator Duncan, in order to increase her living expense budget for 2025-26 by \$5,000.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/088(P) – Request to Reallocate Surpluses

Isabelle Ricard made a statement regarding a request to use surpluses from overall senators' office budgets funding envelop to cover the pressure of economic salary increases and payouts related to House Officers' retirements.

After debate, the Honourable Senator Forest moved that the Senate Administration be authorized to proceed with the required budget transfers, up to a maximum of \$1,992,000 from anticipated surpluses from the overall Senators' Office Budgets funding envelop to cover the pressure of economic salary increases and the payouts related to House Officers' retirements.

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

CIBA/2025-12-11/089(P) – For Information Item sent via email

The chair made a statement regarding items sent via email to members for information purposes.

CIBA/2025-12-11/090(P) – Other Matters

The Honourable Senator Oudar paid tribute to the chair.

The chair paid tribute to Gérald Lafrenière, Deputy Clerk, who will soon be retiring from the Senate.

Gérald Lafrenière made a statement.

The Honourable Senator Henkel recommended that the committee consider offering a memento to employees in honor of their long service upon retirement.

The chair welcomed the Honourable Senator Loffreda to the committee.

The Honourable Senator Loffreda made a statement.

At 9:54 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