



SENATE
SÉNAT
CANADA

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

Report of the Standing Committee on Rules,
Procedures and the Rights of Parliament

The Honourable Diane Bellemare, *Chair*
The Honourable Denise Batters, *Deputy Chair*
The Honourable Stan Kutcher, *Deputy Chair*

February 2024

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates



SENATE | SÉNAT
CANADA

For more information please contact us:

by email: RPRD@sen.parl.gc.ca

by mail: The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament
Senate, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0A4

This report can be downloaded at: www.sencanada.ca

The Senate is on Twitter: @SenateCA

follow the committee using the hashtag #RPRD

Ce rapport est également offert en français

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP.....	5
ORDER OF REFERENCE	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
INTRODUCTION.....	8
REPORT PLAN.....	8
OUTLINE OF THE MAJOR THEMES.....	9
A. General.....	9
(i) Role of Senate Committees	9
(ii) Structure of Committees	10
(iii) Resources	11
B. Mandates	11
(i) Amendments to Current Mandates and Committee Titles	12
(ii) Reconciliation Lens.....	14
(iii) Communication Between Chairs.....	14
(iv) Orders of Reference	14
C. Membership.....	16
(i) Number of Members.....	16
(ii) Representation.....	17
(iii) Expertise of Members	19
D. Meeting Schedule.....	19
(i) Monday Meetings	20
(ii) Tuesday Evening Meetings	21
(iii) Wednesday Evening Meetings.....	22
(iv) Exception for the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.....	22
(v) Duration and Frequency of Meetings	22

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

(vi)	Rotation.....	23
(vii)	Additional Meeting Times.....	24
E.	Workload.....	24
(i)	Distribution of Legislative Work.....	25
(ii)	Creation of Subcommittees to Distribute Work.....	25
(iii)	Vacancies in the Senate.....	26
F.	Committee Business.....	26
(i)	Travel.....	27
(ii)	Witness Selection.....	28
(iii)	Support for Witnesses.....	29
(iv)	Reports.....	29
(v)	Hybrid Meetings and Videoconference.....	30
(vi)	External Legal Counsel.....	31
G.	Effectiveness of Committee Work.....	32
(i)	Government Responses.....	32
(ii)	Communications.....	33
	APPENDIX A – Witnesses.....	35

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



The Honourable Diane
Bellemare
Chair

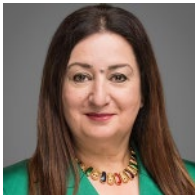


The Honourable Denise
Batters
Deputy Chair



The Honourable Stan
Kutcher
Deputy Chair

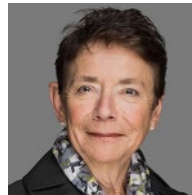
The Honourable Senators



Salma Ataullahjan



Robert Black



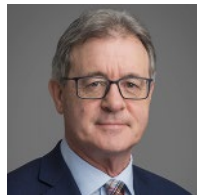
Bev Busson



Jane Cordy



Stephen Greene



Michael L. MacDonald



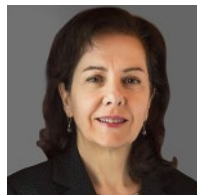
Marie-Françoise Mégie



Ratna Omidvar



Pierrette Ringuette



Raymonde Saint-Germain



David M. Wells



Yuen Pau Woo

Ex-officio members of the committee:

The Honourable Senator Marc Gold, P.C., or Patti LaBoucane-Benson
The Honourable Senator Donald Plett or Yonah Martin

Other Senators who have participated in the study:

The Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu
The Honourable Gwen Boniface
The Honourable Marty Deacon
The Honourable Tony Dean
The Honourable Sabi Marwah (retired)
The Honourable Victor Oh
The Honourable Hassan Yussuff

Parliamentary Information and Research Services, Library of Parliament:

François Delisle, Analyst
Erin Virgint, Analyst

Senate Committees Directorate:

Adam Thompson, Committee Clerk
Lexley Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant
Laurie-Anne Spooner, Administrative Assistant (until September 2023)

ORDER OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to Rule 12-7(2), the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament is authorized to propose from time to time, on its own initiative, amendments to the Rules for the consideration of the Senate, to examine any question of privilege referred to the committee by the Senate and to consider the orders and practices of the Senate and the privileges of Parliament.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEFA	Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade
AGFO	Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry
AOVS	Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight
APPA	Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples
BANC	Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy
CIBA	Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration
ENEV	Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources
LCJC	Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
NFFN	Standing Senate Committee on National Finance
OLLO	Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages
POFO	Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans
RIDR	Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights
RPRD	Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament
SECD	Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs
SELE	Committee of Selection
SOCI	Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
TRCM	Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications

INTRODUCTION

1. This document summarizes the testimony heard on the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament's (RPRD's) study on committee structure and mandates.
2. From 28 March 2023 to 21 November 2023, RPRD heard from 33 current and former senators, representing 11 standing committees and one subcommittee. On 7 March 2023 and 7 November 2023, RPRD also heard from Shaila Anwar, Clerk Assistant, Committees Directorate, Senate of Canada.
3. This document is divided into the following themes:
 - general;
 - mandates;
 - membership;
 - meeting schedule;
 - workload;
 - committee business; and
 - effectiveness of committee work.

REPORT PLAN

4. On 17 October 2023, RPRD agreed to the following report structure and timeline for the study on the structure and mandates of Senate committees:
 - Report 1: Summary of evidence and committee and member observations
 - Report 2: Select Proposed Amendments to the *Rules of the Senate of Canada*
 - Report 3: Mandates and Structure of Senate Committees
 - Report 4: Membership of Committees
5. RPRD recognizes that the implementation of its recommendations may occur over a longer period.

OUTLINE OF THE MAJOR THEMES

A. General

(i) Role of Senate Committees

6. Many witnesses stated that Senate committees provide crucial oversight of proposed legislation and investigate matters of importance to Canadians. Witnesses noted that the Senate's role as the chamber of sober second thought undoubtedly extends into committee work.¹
7. Through in-depth studies, Senate committees consider regional interests and give a voice to underrepresented groups.² Furthermore, by meeting with a wide range of witnesses, committees can connect with the communities and individuals that are impacted by topics and policies being studied.³
8. Witnesses discussed the important impacts of committee work in raising awareness on specific issues, and ultimately having a direct effect on public policy.⁴
9. Some witnesses also noted that Senate committees can fill gaps and study issues that the House of Commons is unable to study.⁵
10. Additionally, as senators develop expertise and long-term perspective, they can offer a unique approach to proposed legislation and issues.⁶ Furthermore, the Senate is fortunate to have members with expertise in diverse areas of study.
11. Some members of RPRD are of the view that an essential role of Senate committees is to respond to emerging issues of national interest. To respond to such issues in a timely fashion, some members of RPRD acknowledge that greater flexibility or nimbleness in the overall structure and functioning of

¹ Senate, Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament (RPRD), *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Jaffer); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

² RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Arnot; Senator Francis).

³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan).

⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan; Senator Hartling).

⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (former Senator Serge Joyal); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Mr. Joyal); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe).

committees is required. To respond to emerging issues or national emergencies, one witness⁷ and some members of RPRD suggest the Senate establish special committees more frequently.

12. Some members of RPRD are of the view that Senate committee workloads are such that their inflexible schedules give them little opportunity to respond to emerging issues.

(ii) Structure of Committees

13. The Rules provide for 17 standing committees and the Committee of Selection (SELE), which is currently a standing committee by virtue of a sessional order.⁸ Of these standing committees, some are focused on internal governance,⁹ while others are organized around policy fields. The Rules also stipulate that there are two standing joint committees,¹⁰ and that special joint committees can be created.¹¹
14. Under rules 12-10 and 12-11, the Senate may also establish special committees and legislative committees.
15. Additionally, rule 12-12 gives a standing or special committee the power to create one or more subcommittees to conduct work on its behalf. There are currently six Senate subcommittees.
16. Some witnesses suggested that the Senate committee structure needs a complete and comprehensive review.¹² Such a review could involve comparing the committee structures in the Senate and House of Commons and determine if work is being unnecessarily duplicated. Policy gaps in the Senate committee structure should also be identified. As an example, the topic of Canadian heritage was raised, which has a standing committee in the House of Commons and not in the Senate.¹³

⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

⁸ Senate, *Rules of the Senate of Canada*, September 2023, rule 12-1 and rule 12-7.

⁹ These committees include CIBA, RPRD, CONF, AOVS and SELE.

¹⁰ The Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament and the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations.

¹¹ There are currently two special joint committees shared between the Senate and the House of Commons: the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency and the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

¹² RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

¹³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

17. Regarding the overall number of Senate committees, some witnesses recommended reducing or consolidating the number of standing committees,¹⁴ recognizing that resources, time and the number of senators available to sit on committees is limited.¹⁵ If such a reduction results in gaps in certain policy areas, it was suggested that special committees could be established as needed.¹⁶

(iii) Resources

18. Throughout the study, members of RPRD discussed how restructuring Senate committees could impact resources. Some members of RPRD are of the view that to function optimally, Senate committees require adequate resources including staff, interpretation and travel budgets.
19. Some members of RPRD are concerned that parliamentary resources for shared services disproportionately favour House of Commons committees and stressed that, as the Senate is an equal parliamentary chamber, resources should be more equitably distributed.

B. Mandates

20. Due to the general nature of the mandates listed in the Rules, some issues may overlap between committees. For example, issues related to technology and communications may fall within the mandate of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communication (TRCM), as well as the mandate of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs (SECD).¹⁷
21. When reviewing mandates, some witnesses said that the wording selected should be flexible, forward-looking, and broad.
22. Many witnesses agreed that as policy areas are rapidly evolving, mandates should be reviewed periodically. Several witnesses suggested that such reviews occur every five years.¹⁸

¹⁴ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; former Senator Diane F. Griffin).

¹⁵ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Ms. Griffin).

¹⁶ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

¹⁷ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean).

¹⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey; Senator Omidvar, Senator Seidman; RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Ms. Griffin); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean).

(i) Amendments to Current Mandates and Committee Titles

23. Specific recommendations were made regarding the mandates of some committees, including:

- Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA): Add “development” to the AEFA’s mandate and change the committee’s name to “Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Development.”¹⁹ Additionally, add “international human rights” to AEFA’s mandate to avoid duplication of work on this topic by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (RIDR).²⁰
- Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (AGFO): Expand AGFO’s mandate to include natural resources and rename the committee “Agriculture and Natural Resources.”²¹ The topic of “forestry” is too narrow in scope and could be expanded to “natural resources,” which may include topics related to forestry, conservation, parks, wildlife and fisheries.
- Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (SOCI): Remove “science and technology” from SOCI’s mandate,²² and move these topics to another committee (for example TRCM²³). SOCI’s current mandate was described as “over-broad” and “over-encompassing.”²⁴ Due to SOCI’s heavy workload, SOCI is unable to regularly consider the “science and technology” portion of its mandate. If such changes are made, a recommendation was made to rename SOCI to the “Standing Committee on Health and Social Affairs.”²⁵
- Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (TRCM): TRCM’s mandate was described as outdated. TRCM’s two major topics – transport and communications – may have once been linked but were described as two distinct topics.²⁶ Due to the expanding nature of both topics, it was suggested that transport and communications each require

¹⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm).

²⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder).

²¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Ms. Griffin; Senator Black).

²² RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey; Senator Omidvar; Senator Seidman; Senator Petitclerc).

²³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Petitclerc; Senator Seidman; Senator Omidvar).

²⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

²⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

²⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechéne).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

their own committee.²⁷ Additionally, the reference to the “telegraph” should be removed from TRCM’s website.²⁸

24. Some witnesses requested that certain committee mandates not be merged with other committees. Specifically:

- Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (RIDR): Do not merge RIDR’s mandate with another committee or make it a subcommittee of AEFA. RIDR has a heavy workload and produces impactful studies that require a full committee.²⁹
- Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (POFO): Maintain current mandate of POFO. Merging “fisheries” into another committee mandate will result in less focus on fisheries in Canada.³⁰

25. RPRD heard that the following subject areas could be grouped together as standing committees:

- Banking, Industry and Commerce;³¹
- Science, Technology and Communications;³² and
- Energy and Transport.³³

26. Members of RPRD acknowledge the diversity of views that were presented throughout this study on the mandates of Senate committees. Members of RPRD agree that some changes to Senate committee mandates should be made; however, no consensus on specific amendments has been reached at the time of reporting.

²⁷ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

²⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechéne). Note: the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications’ mandate in the Rule 12-7(8) does not refer to the “telegraph”; however, TRCM’s committee website mentions the telegraph. See: Senate of Canada, [Standing Committee on Transport and Communications – About the Committee](#).

²⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan; Senator Bernard; Senator Hartling); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2023 (former Senator A. Raynell Andreychuk,).

³⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning).

³¹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechéne).

³² RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Petitclerc); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

³³ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

27. To ensure committees are flexible and able to respond to emerging policy areas, some members of RPRD are of the view that mandates should not be too prescriptive.

(ii) Reconciliation Lens

28. One witness noted that although the mandate of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples' (APPA) is to consider matters relating to the Indigenous peoples of Canada, this lens should be applied to all committee studies to better understand how the topics and legislation being examined impact this population.³⁴
29. Additionally, one witness recommended that a reconciliation lens, aimed at improving the relationship between the Crown and the Indigenous peoples of Canada, be integrated into all Senate committee mandates.³⁵

(iii) Communication Between Chairs

30. Some witnesses agreed that they are often unaware of what business other committees are undertaking and observed that there may be unnecessary overlap in work. To avoid duplication of committee work, and to save time and resources, some witnesses recommended that committee chairs hold regular meetings to discuss current and upcoming work.³⁶ Others recommended that a specific time be designated allowing information on committee work to be shared in the chamber.³⁷
31. Some members of RPRD are of the view that a formal meeting is not necessary to discuss committee work. Rather, such conversations should occur in caucus or group meetings.

(iv) Orders of Reference

32. An order of reference is a decision of the Senate authorizing a committee to undertake the study of an inquiry, paper, bill or other matter. It establishes the

³⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Francis).

³⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Arnot).

³⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Bernard; Senator Hartling); RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Seidman); RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black); RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Boniface; Senator Dean, Senator Galvez) and RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Ms. Andreychuk).

³⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Ms. Griffin; Senator Busson; Senator Manning).

scope of the study and may also confer other powers the committee needs to conduct the study.³⁸

33. Most committees require an order of reference adopted in the Chamber to carry out their work. While the Rules establish mandates for committees, the text of these mandates serve as guidelines as to the type of matters that may be referred to each committee, and do not provide any authority in and of themselves.³⁹ No committee may undertake the consideration of a bill or a special study prior to the Senate adopting an order of reference authorizing it to do so. In accordance with rule 12-9(1), standing committees and standing joint committees can inquire into and report on any matter referred to them by the Senate.
34. However, four committees are empowered by the Rules to act on their own initiative without a prior order of reference from the Senate: the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA), the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament (RPRD), the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators (CONF) and the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight (AOVS).
35. The scope of special studies can vary considerably. Some orders of reference are broad and give the committee added flexibility in relation to area(s) of study, while others are narrow and directive. For example, general orders of references allow committees to deal with pressing issues or to hear from agents of Parliament.
36. Some witnesses differentiated between “general” and “specific” orders of reference.⁴⁰ Under a “general” order of reference, committees can initiate study topics without tabling a motion in the chamber. With a “specific” order of reference, the specific parameters, objectives and work plan of a proposed study are presented to the chamber in the form of a motion. Some witnesses suggested that the “specific” orders of reference are preferable as they allow all

³⁸ Rule 12-9 empowers standing and standing joint committees to “inquire into and report upon such matters as may be referred to them by the Senate.” Furthermore, rule 12-8(1) allows the Senate to refer any residual matter such as a message, petition, inquiry, paper or other matter to any committee.

³⁹ Of note, rules 12-7(1)-12-7(4) empowers CIBA, RPRD, CONF and AOVS to act on their own initiative without a prior order of reference from the Senate.

⁴⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Seidman).

senators to become aware of planned committee work and may avoid a duplication.⁴¹

37. One witness called for greater equity between “general” and “specific” orders of reference. It was suggested that studies taken under a general order of reference are treated as lower priority and are not publicized to the same degree as studies with a “specific” order of reference on the Senate of Canada website.⁴²
38. Other witnesses said that their committees mainly work under general orders of reference, because it is efficient and may avoid delays from the chamber.⁴³

C. Membership

39. In practice, leaders of recognized parties and parliamentary groups negotiate the number of seats that their party or group will obtain on committees on behalf of their party or group. To allocate seats in some parties or groups, senators indicate their preference to their respective leadership. Some witnesses mentioned that this “self-selection” approach is not strategic and may not result in the most balanced membership.⁴⁴ Some members of RPRD disagree with this view.

(i) Number of Members

40. According to rules 12-3(1) and 12-3(2), most standing Senate committees are composed of 12 members, with several exceptions.⁴⁵ Of note, senators who are not members of a standing committee are permitted to attend and participate in committee meetings, with the exception of CONF⁴⁶ meetings. Non-committee members are not permitted to move motions, vote or be considered part of the committee’s quorum.

⁴¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Seidman).

⁴² RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

⁴³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan).

⁴⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

⁴⁵ Rule 12-3(2) provides that RIDR, SECD, and OLLO be comprised of nine members and that CIBA and RPRD be comprised of fifteen members. Additionally, SELE has nine members, CONF has five members and AOVS has three senators and two external members. Committees may also establish sessional orders to temporarily change the number of members. For example, a sessional order adopted by the Senate provides for 12 members on SECD (see: Senate, *Journals*, 11 March 2020, pp. 413–415).

⁴⁶ Rule 12-3(2)(f) provides that CONF shall be composed of five members. A motion to appoint six members to CONF was adopted on 9 December 2021. See: Senate, *Journals of the Senate*, 9 December 2021.

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

41. Some witnesses said that 12-member committees are too large and should be reduced to nine. Witnesses explained that with 12 members, there is inadequate time to question witnesses with any depth.⁴⁷
42. Some witnesses also noted that decreasing committee membership to nine should be considered due to vacancies in the Senate. Some witnesses said that with numerous vacancies in the Senate, the number of committees that each senator sits on has increased. Reduced committee membership may allow senators to sit on a more appropriate number of committees, to allow for increased focus.⁴⁸
43. Some witnesses recommended maintaining 12-member committees to ensure the representation of certain regions and groups.⁴⁹ One witness explained that it may be difficult to obtain adequate regional, linguistic and Indigenous representation on committees, if the number of members was reduced to nine.⁵⁰
44. For the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs (VEAC), it was suggested that membership be increased from five to six or seven members. Such an increase may provide for greater regional representation.⁵¹ Of note, rule 12-12(2) provides that a subcommittee can be composed of no more than half the membership of its full committee, including the ex-officio members.
45. Some members of RPRD are of the view that larger committee memberships can impact the opposition's ability to question the government due to limited time for question and answer. Furthermore, some members of RPRD acknowledge that groups and caucuses that have few members may be unfairly impacted by changes to the number of members assigned to committees.

(ii) Representation

46. Many witnesses agreed on the importance of regional and other forms (Indigenous, minority, gender, language) of representation within committee

⁴⁷ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey, Senator Omidvar); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechêne); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

⁴⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey).

⁴⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Jaffer); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Galvez); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁵⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁵¹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Richards).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

membership. It was suggested that the Senate should be more deliberate in ensuring regional representation on committees.⁵²

47. Witnesses noted that at times, there are significant gaps in certain types of representation on some committees:
 - AEFA’s membership lacks representation from Western Canada;⁵³
 - the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resource’s (ENEV) membership lacks representation from Atlantic Canada and Western Canada at times;⁵⁴
 - the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages’ (OLLO) membership lacks anglophone senators;⁵⁵
 - RIDR’s membership is consistently “gendered and racialized;”⁵⁶ and
 - the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance (NFFN) lacks representation from Western Canada.⁵⁷
48. One witness emphasized the need for improved regional, linguistic and Indigenous representation on NFFN.⁵⁸
49. Some witnesses suggested that the Committee of Selection (SELE) could be responsible for establishing and/or monitoring regional and other forms of representation.⁵⁹ One witness also suggested that SELE may also consider expertise of members when establishing membership.⁶⁰
50. Some witnesses noted that steering committees should ensure regional representation and other forms of representation.⁶¹ One witness indicated recognized parties and parliamentary groups play an important role in ensuring adequate representation on committees.⁶²

⁵² RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁵³ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm).

⁵⁴ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

⁵⁵ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Poirier).

⁵⁶ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Bernard).

⁵⁷ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁵⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁵⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder; Senator Downe); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

⁶⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

⁶¹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

⁶² RPRD, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2023 (Ms. Andreychuk).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

51. Some witnesses suggested that members should be assigned to committees primarily based on merit or expertise with the subject matter, rather than party or group affiliation.⁶³
52. Some members of RPRD are of the view that caucuses and groups should decide which senators within their caucus or group will be named to each committee.

(iii) Expertise of Members

53. Many witnesses agreed that having a mix of expertise amongst committee members produces better work.
54. Some witnesses said that it can be beneficial to have members with constitutional and legal expertise serving on each committee, to ensure constitutional or *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* implications are considered.⁶⁴ Some members of RPRD note, however, that the number of senators with such expertise is limited and that it may not be practical to require such expertise on each committee.
55. Some witnesses recognized the value in long-term tenure in maintaining a committee's institutional memory.⁶⁵ Other witnesses said that turnover of members can be helpful in bringing different perspectives to a committee's work.⁶⁶
56. Some members of RPRD are of the view that caucuses and groups should consider the expertise of their members and decide which senators within their caucus or group will be named to each committee.

D. Meeting Schedule

57. Committee meetings are scheduled around Senate sittings and group and caucus and parliamentary group meetings. Furthermore, the Senate committee schedule is prepared in accordance with chapter 5:03 of the *Senate Administrative Rules* (SARs). The SARs direct the Clerk Assistant, Committees to prepare a weekly meeting schedule in consultation with all leaders and

⁶³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

⁶⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cotter; Mr. Joyal).

⁶⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Mr. Joyal); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder).

⁶⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Jaffer); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

facilitators, for all committees and subcommittees that meet regularly. In practice, leaders and facilitators delegate this task for whips and liaisons.

58. There are certain restrictions imposed by the Rules on when committees can meet. Of note, rule 12-18(1) provides that no committee may meet during a sitting of the Senate. However, the Senate can adopt a motion to allow for committee meetings during Senate sittings if necessary.
59. The specific concerns raised by witnesses regarding committee scheduling are outlined below.

(i) Monday Meetings

60. The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, SECD and OLLO are scheduled on Mondays for a single four-hour time slot.
61. Many witnesses agreed that Monday meetings can be problematic as many senators travel during this time slot.⁶⁷ As a result, committees that meet on Mondays tend to have an over-representation of members from Ontario and Quebec due to proximity, and other regions are frequently underrepresented.⁶⁸ Some witnesses added that it can be difficult to obtain quorum for Monday meetings, often due to travel delays.⁶⁹
62. Some witnesses noted that rule 12-18(2)(b), which requires an order of the Senate or requires the chairs to obtain agreement from the Leaders of the Government and Opposition to sit on Mondays after a break week, should be amended or abrogated. This rule creates uncertainty when planning meetings and complicates members' travel plans.⁷⁰ Some members of RPRD note that testimony from all leaders of groups and caucuses has not been received on this matter at the time of reporting.

⁶⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier; Senator Poirier); RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan; Senator Hartling); RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

⁶⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan; Senator Hartling); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean).

⁶⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan).

⁷⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Boniface; Senator Dean).

(ii) Tuesday Evening Meetings

63. Many witnesses stated that Tuesday evening committee meetings are often impacted by extended sittings in the Senate, as adjournment is not set at a fixed time. It was suggested by some witnesses that frequent delays and cancellations of Tuesday meetings can be disrespectful to witnesses and may reflect poorly upon the Senate.⁷¹ Last-minute cancellations of meetings can also result in a wasted time and resources.⁷²
64. The unpredictability of the Chamber's Tuesday schedule has meant that affected committees – AGFO, ENEV and POFO – are often left to choose between not scheduling meetings during their allotted time slot or scheduling a meeting that is likely to be delayed or cancelled.
65. As a solution, it was suggested that rule 12-18(1) be amended to permit committees to meet while the chamber is sitting.⁷³ Some members of RPRD note that instead of amending the Rules, the Senate could adopt a sessional order permitting some or all committees to meet while the chamber is sitting.
66. Some members of RPRD are concerned about the implications of amending rule 12-18(1) for small caucuses and groups, as smaller caucuses or groups may not have enough members to sit in the chamber and on committee simultaneously. Further, it may not be appropriate to require some senators to choose between participating in chamber deliberations or in committee.
67. Some members of RPRD note that rule 12-18(1) maintains the important practice in the Senate, of ensuring that senators can participate in chamber and committee proceedings without conflict. Some members of RPRD note that the establishment of this rule was deliberate in recognizing that there are a limited number of senators and a limited number of sitting hours per week in the Senate.

⁷¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Galvez; Senator Massicotte); RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Petitclerc); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Ms. Griffin; Senator Manning).

⁷² RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Galvez); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning).

⁷³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

(iii) Wednesday Evening Meetings

68. It was mentioned during the study that committees that meet on Wednesdays at 4:15 p.m. are occasionally delayed due to deferred votes.⁷⁴ One witness⁷⁵ and some members of RPRD disagree with this assessment and suggest that Wednesday evening committee meetings are rarely interrupted. For over twenty years, a sessional order has set an early adjournment time for Wednesdays to allow committees to meet after adjournment.
69. One witness noted that Wednesday evening meetings at 6:45 p.m. are not ideal for NFFN for two reasons. First, many of NFFN's members also serve on BANC, which meets from 4:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. on Wednesdays, resulting in a taxing schedule for some members. Second, as NFFN meets late into Wednesday evening, it is difficult for the chair to present reports on Thursdays as committee staff are unable to prepare them overnight.⁷⁶ This can be problematic for NFFN as the committee often works under short deadlines.
70. Some members of RPRD are of the view that voting is a critical role for all senators and may warrant occasional delays in committee meeting start times.

(iv) Exception for the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance

71. One witness noted that NFFN should be able to meet while the Senate is sitting, without having to seek special permission. Due to the nature of NFFN's work and tight reporting deadlines, it was suggested that flexibility be provided to this committee in the scheduling of its meetings.⁷⁷

(v) Duration and Frequency of Meetings

72. Most standing committees are scheduled to meet for two two-hour meetings or a single four-hour meeting per sitting week.
73. Some suggestions that were raised regarding the duration and frequency of meetings include:

⁷⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm).

⁷⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

⁷⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁷⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

- Replace two two-hour meetings per week with a single three-hour meeting. Some witnesses suggested that such a schedule would be less likely to be impacted by delays or cancellations due to chamber activity.⁷⁸
- Longer meetings can be beneficial as they may allow members to fully immerse in the subject matter. Furthermore, when studying legislation, longer meetings may provide an opportunity for clause-by-clause consideration, without interruption.⁷⁹
- Maintain four-hour time slots for committees that meet on Mondays as they provide greater flexibility in scheduling.⁸⁰
- Maintain two-hour meetings. Three- and four-hour meetings are too long in duration, and witnesses in the third hour may not receive the same attention as witnesses in the first or second hour.⁸¹

74. One witness noted that with its current workload, the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (LCJC) requires more than four hours per week to complete its work.⁸²

75. The Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs (VEAC) meets for one hour once per week. It was suggested that VEAC's weekly meeting be extended to 90 minutes to allow for greater flexibility in scheduling.⁸³

(vi) Rotation

76. Some witnesses compared the Senate's "set" committee schedule to the House of Commons' "rotating" committee schedule. The House of Commons committee scheduling follows a system of rotating time slots that alternate in September and January.

77. The "set" approach used by Senate committees provides certainty in members' schedules as the committee schedule rarely changes. However, how the inflexibility of the "set" schedule, prevents some senators from participating in

⁷⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder, Senator Boehm); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Busson; Senator Manning).

⁷⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder).

⁸⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean; Senator Boniface).

⁸¹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

⁸² RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu).

⁸³ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Richards).

committees that meet on Mondays (OLLO, SECD, RIDR), as it is a travel day for many senators.

78. Some witnesses recommended that committee time slots be rotated every few years to encourage shifts in membership and to promote a degree of fairness in the committee schedule.⁸⁴
79. Some members of RPRD would like to explore the possibility of establishing a committee rotation that lasts for the duration of a parliament.

(vii) Additional Meeting Times

80. One suggestion was made to expand the committee schedule to include time slots on Monday afternoons and on Fridays.⁸⁵ Some disagreed with this suggestion and noted issues posed by airline schedules on Mondays and Fridays.⁸⁶
81. A suggestion was also raised that the two-hour evening suspension⁸⁷ be considered for Tuesday evening meetings.⁸⁸
82. Some members of RPRD disagreed with the suggestion of additional meeting time slots on Mondays and Fridays because some senators require these days for travel to and from Ottawa.
83. Some members of RPRD are of the view that the evening suspension provides some flexibility in senators' rigid schedules as well as time for senators to prepare for other work, such as speeches. Furthermore, this time is often used for caucus or group meetings.

E. Workload

84. RPRD heard many concerns with the overall workload of Senate committees. The following section outlines the issues raised in relation to the overall workload of Senate committees.

⁸⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar); RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechêne).

⁸⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu); RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning).

⁸⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Poirier); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey).

⁸⁷ Rule 3-3(1) provides that if the Senate has not concluded its business at 6:00 p.m., the Speaker or the chair shall suspend the sitting until 8:00 p.m.

⁸⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Ms. Griffin).

(i) Distribution of Legislative Work

85. Some witnesses noted that there is an uneven distribution in legislative work amongst Senate committees.⁸⁹ Particularly, the volume of legislation received by LCJC⁹⁰, SOCI⁹¹ and NFFN⁹² has impeded their ability to undertake special studies and fully fulfill their mandates.
86. According to some witnesses, special studies are a crucial part of Senate committee work. Some witnesses commented on the impact that special studies can have – in terms of connecting with Canadians, raising awareness on important issues and, at times, promoting legislative changes.⁹³
87. Some members of RPRD are of the view that Senate committees should prioritize legislation.
88. Additionally, witnesses noted that LCJC and SOCI receive so much legislation that they are unable to undertake statutory reviews of legislation that fall within their mandates.⁹⁴
89. Some witnesses noted that LCJC, BANC and NFFN’s heavy legislative workloads have affected their ability to study legislation as thoroughly as some members would prefer.⁹⁵ One witness noted that NFFN would benefit from more notice for bill studies and less restrictive reporting deadlines, so that members can carefully consider legislation that may have major financial implications for Canadians.⁹⁶

(ii) Creation of Subcommittees to Distribute Work

90. To alleviate some committees’ heavy workload, some witnesses recommended that subcommittees be created to distribute the work. Specifically, a suggestion was raised to establish an LCJC subcommittee to take on specific roles such as

⁸⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 7 March 2023 (Shaila Anwar, Clerk Assistant, Committees Directorate Senate of Canada); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu; Senator Jaffer).

⁹⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu; Senator Jaffer; Senator Cotter).

⁹¹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Bovey; Senator Petitclerc; Senator Seidman).

⁹² RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁹³ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu; Senator Jaffer; Senator Poirier); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey).

⁹⁴ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Jaffer); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 2 May 2023 (Senator Seidman).

⁹⁵ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu; Senator Jaffer; Senator Cotter); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

⁹⁶ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

performing statutory reviews, reviewing the *Criminal Code*⁹⁷ or to assist other committees with constitutional questions (division of powers, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* implications).⁹⁸

91. Some witnesses disagreed with this approach, noting that establishing a subcommittee may not resolve issues related to heavy workloads as it would require more time and resources.⁹⁹
92. Some members of RPRD noted that the creation of subcommittees may not resolve workload issues as they create new demands for members of the main committee who may be required to sit on both.

(iii) Vacancies in the Senate

93. As of February 2024, there are eight vacancies in the Senate.¹⁰⁰
94. Some witnesses discussed the impact that vacancies can have on committee work and the overall workload of individual senators. It was suggested that due to perpetual vacancies, current senators serve on an unreasonable number of committees. Vacancies in regions with fewer seats, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, can result in a lack of that region's representation or an increased workload on senators from that region.¹⁰¹ By serving on too many committees, some senators may not be able to develop in-depth knowledge of each subject area.¹⁰²
95. Some witnesses suggested that the overall workload of committees may be more evenly distributed if there were fewer perpetual vacancies.¹⁰³

F. Committee Business

96. Throughout the study, witnesses commented on many aspects of committee business, shared best practices and offered recommendations that aim to improve how committees function. Such comments and recommendations are summarized below.

⁹⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Boisvenu; Senator Jaffer).

⁹⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cotter).

⁹⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

¹⁰⁰ Senate of Canada, *Senators – Standings*.

¹⁰¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Mr. Joyal).

¹⁰² RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Bovey).

¹⁰³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Mr. Joyal); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar; Senator Bovey).

(i) Travel

97. Many witnesses agreed that committee travel is an important information-gathering tool. RPRD heard that holding meetings outside of Ottawa and hearing from individuals where they live is important to understanding their challenges. Committee travel is particularly useful when studying international affairs and the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups, as it helps to gain first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by certain communities.¹⁰⁴ Such an understanding cannot be obtained by inviting a single witness to Ottawa to speak on behalf of their community.¹⁰⁵
98. Some witnesses added that virtual meetings cannot replicate the interaction that members have with communities when committees are able to travel.¹⁰⁶
99. Some witnesses specified that all committee members should be permitted to travel, rather than a select few.¹⁰⁷ Further, to ensure adequate representation (region, gender, Indigenous, etc.), it was suggested that non-committee members be permitted to travel with a committee.¹⁰⁸ Of note, a rule change would be required to permit non-committee members to travel with a committee.
100. One witness noted that at times, it is sufficient to send the chair and co-chairs for the gathering of specific evidence rather than all members.¹⁰⁹
101. One witness stated that it is unclear how funds are dispersed amongst committees for travel and recommended increased clarity on how travel is prioritized and approved.¹¹⁰
102. Some members of RPRD do not agree that there is a lack of clarity in how travel funds are dispersed among committees, as the approval of committee travel budgets falls within CIBA's mandate.

¹⁰⁴ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm; Senator Downe); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Senator Manning); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

¹⁰⁵ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Busson).

¹⁰⁶ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

¹⁰⁷ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder; Senator Downe); and RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

¹⁰⁸ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning).

¹⁰⁹ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 3 October 2023 (Ms. Andreychuk).

¹¹⁰ RPRD, [Evidence](#), 25 April 2023 (Senator Hartling).

(ii) Witness Selection

103. To prioritize witnesses, many committees consider witness lists prepared by the Library of Parliament analysts and recommendations by members of the committee.
104. One witness said that the current selection process is not innovative and re-invites the same witnesses regularly. One witness stated that the selection process favours witnesses from well-organized lobby groups, as opposed to individuals with unique perspectives. Further, Senate committee witnesses frequently mirror those heard by the corresponding House of Commons committee.¹¹¹
105. Some witnesses noted that Senate committees should aim to hear from different and/or neutral perspectives, to better inform senators.¹¹² Some witnesses further specified that it is important to consider linguistic and regional diversity when establishing witness lists.¹¹³
106. Furthermore, steering committees and the Library of Parliament analysts should be responsible for finding witnesses with original perspectives and that are not associated with the lobby groups that are typically invited.¹¹⁴ Steering committees should also be active in avoiding over-duplication of witnesses heard in the corresponding House of Commons committee study and ensuring a broad range of views are heard.¹¹⁵
107. Some members of RPRD note that steering committees should be responsible for identifying gaps in the witness testimony that was received by the House of Commons committee and invite witnesses accordingly.
108. Some members of RPRD are of the view that it can be useful to re-invite witnesses that were previously heard during the House of Commons study because senators have unique perspectives and may ask different questions.
109. To hear a broader range of perspectives, some members of RPRD suggest that Senate committees reach out to independent organizations (such as the

¹¹¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechêne).

¹¹² RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Cormier); RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechêne); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Ms. Andreychuk).

¹¹³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Galvez).

¹¹⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator Miville-Dechêne); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

¹¹⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald).

Canadian Academy of Health Sciences or the Royal Society of Canada) for expert witness suggestions.

110. Some members of RPRD suggest that committees have the capacity to fact check witness testimony as needed.

(iii) Support for Witnesses

111. Some suggestions were made that trauma-informed and/or culturally sensitive counselling be made available to witnesses appearing before committee to testify on sensitive issues. With such support available, it was suggested that more witnesses may agree to testify.¹¹⁶

112. One witness said that the formal structure of committee meetings may be intimidating or triggering for some witnesses. It was suggested committees consider integrating other meeting formats – such as sharing circles – into their work.¹¹⁷

113. Some members of RPRD acknowledge that witnesses that require mental health support and/or counselling in relation to their appearance may be eligible for reimbursement by completing a Witness Expense Claim through the Senate Committees Directorate.

114. Furthermore, some members of RPRD note that witnesses appear before committees voluntarily and all efforts are made to ensure their experience is comfortable.

(iv) Reports

115. Most committees undergo a similar process when drafting reports. Often, the steering committee works with Library of Parliament analysts to produce draft reports, which are then submitted to the full committee for comments and approval.¹¹⁸

116. It was noted that committee members usually attempt to build a consensus when drafting a report and recommendations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Ataullahjan); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Francis).

¹¹⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Francis).

¹¹⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Poirier); RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Boniface).

¹¹⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black).

117. One witness explained that reaching a consensus adds value to committee reports and recommendations because the Senate’s membership is so diverse. As such, it was recommended that committees avoid using minority reports.¹²⁰ Of note, rule 12-21(1) requires that Senate committee reports contain the conclusions agreed to by the majority.¹²¹ As such, Senate committee reports do not contain “minority reports,” although committees may find creative ways to ensure dissenting opinions are reflected in their reports.
118. Some witnesses agreed that it may be useful to update the format of draft reports. Currently, draft reports are distributed in two separate documents – one in English and one in French. Some witnesses agreed with a proposal that English and French versions of draft reports be presented side-by-side in a single document.¹²²

(v) Hybrid Meetings and Videoconference

119. Some witnesses suggested that the use of hybrid meetings – during which committee members can participate in person and virtually – should be explored.¹²³ Hybrid meetings might be useful for committee meetings on Mondays and Fridays, as many senators are in transit on those days. One witness disagreed, noting that hybrid meetings cannot replicate the level of interaction offered by in-person meetings.¹²⁴
120. It was also noted that videoconferencing can be helpful for committee meetings with witnesses that are unable to travel to Ottawa.¹²⁵ Increased use of videoconference can save resources by decreasing the need to travel.¹²⁶ Of note, hybrid meetings require additional resources from the Senate Administration.

¹²⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Ms. Andreychuk).

¹²¹ Rule 12-21(7) provides an exception for AOVs regarding dissenting opinions. It states that “any member, including the external members shall have the right to include individual observations and dissenting opinions in any report of the committee if the member so wishes.”

¹²² RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Black; Ms. Griffin; Senator Busson); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

¹²³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Petitclerc; Senator Omidvar); RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Busson); RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Senator Arnot; Senator Francis; former Senator Daniel Christmas) and RPRD, *Evidence*, 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

¹²⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

¹²⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Boehm); RPRD, *Evidence*, 30 May 2023 (Senator MacDonald; Senator Miville-Dechêne); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

¹²⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Omidvar).

121. Some members of RPRD also note that the possibility of hybrid participation for committee members may be useful for senators who cannot appear in person for medical reasons.
122. One concern raised regarding videoconferencing during the study was that witnesses that appear virtually may not receive the same attention as witnesses that appear in person. It was suggested that most questions from members are directed at witnesses that appear in person, and the voice of virtual witnesses can be lost.¹²⁷
123. Some members of RPRD would like to explore the use of hybrid meetings, as this meeting format may provide greater flexibility for senators participating in committee from locations outside of Ottawa.
124. Some members of RPRD are of the view that senators cannot as effectively participate or question witnesses in a hybrid committee setting. Some members of RPRD are also of the view that the collegiality and communication among members cannot be easily replicated in the hybrid committee meeting model.

(vi) External Legal Counsel

125. One witness recommended that APPA be authorized to retain external legal counsel specializing in Indigenous law. Such counsel could be retained to advise APPA during its review of government legislation. It was noted that government departments and the Senate Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel may not offer the level of expertise in Indigenous law that an external Indigenous legal expert may be able to provide.¹²⁸
126. As another option, one witness suggested that the Senate Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel hire or contract counsel with expertise in Indigenous Law that could provide a legal opinion when requested by committees.¹²⁹
127. Some members of RPRD are concerned with the financial implications of contracting external legal counsel. Further, some members are of the view that compensating legal experts for their testimony on APPA may have significant

¹²⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Massicotte).

¹²⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Mr. Christmas).

¹²⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 3 October 2023 (Mr. Christmas).

implications on other committees that regularly invite legal experts as witnesses, such as LCJC.

G. Effectiveness of Committee Work

128. Witnesses agreed that Senate committees produce reports that draw attention to important policy issues. Some witnesses expressed an interest in measuring effectiveness of committee reports and how the work of committees can reach more Canadians.

129. Specifically, members considered how to measure the impact of committee observations and recommendations on public policy.

130. Some suggestions were that:

- committees monitor actions taken by governments following observations and/or recommendations made in committee reports;¹³⁰
- committees monitor how their reports are used by stakeholders, if possible;¹³¹
- committees be proactive in questioning government officials on the implementation of reports;¹³² and
- committees could invite ministers and government officials in the years following the tabling of a report, to comment on actions taken and relevant developments.¹³³

(i) Government Responses

131. Requesting government responses in reports presents an opportunity for committees to engage with the executive in a deliberate fashion on the content of their reports.¹³⁴ Further, committees may use government responses as an opportunity to draw attention to their work.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Mr. Joyal); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Downe).

¹³¹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Poirier).

¹³² RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Jaffer).

¹³³ RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Boniface).

¹³⁴ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder).

¹³⁵ RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Bernard).

132. Some witnesses expressed frustration with government responses, suggesting they can take an excessive amount of time¹³⁶ and that the content of such responses does not always address the concerns raised by committees in their reports.¹³⁷
133. Some members of RPRD agree on the need for a more structured and effective mechanism of accountability regarding government responses.
134. Some members of RPRD note that, occasionally, committees may deem the substance of a government response as inadequate or inaccurate. In such cases, committees should study the government response and possibly request an additional response, which is permitted under rule 12-23(4).

(ii) Communications

135. Some witnesses noted that greater efforts should be made to increase the visibility of committee reports.¹³⁸ One suggestion raised was that committees hold press conferences regarding their reports outside of Ottawa, to raise interest in other regions and garner attention from local media.¹³⁹
136. One witness noted that committee leadership should play an active role in the promotion of committee work.¹⁴⁰ To further publicize committee work when presenting reports, some members of RPRD suggest that committee chairs should provide a short overview of the study, along with key findings and recommendations in the chamber. Adding some context, in addition to the report number and title may draw greater attention to the important work of Senate committees.
137. Some members of RPRD agree that greater efforts should be considered in promoting the work of Senate committees to the public; however, no amendments to the Rules are required on this matter.

¹³⁶ RPRD, *Evidence*, 28 March 2023 (Senator Poirier); RPRD, *Evidence*, 25 April 2023 (Senator Atallahjan; Senator Hartling); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 21 November 2023 (Senator Mockler).

¹³⁷ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Busson).

¹³⁸ RPRD, *Evidence*, 18 April 2023 (Senator Harder); RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning); RPRD, *Evidence*, 2 May 2023 (Senator Seidman); and RPRD, *Evidence*, 16 May 2023 (Senator Dean; Senator Richards).

¹³⁹ RPRD, *Evidence*, 9 May 2023 (Senator Manning).

¹⁴⁰ RPRD, *Evidence*, 24 October 2023 (Senator Wallin).

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

138. Some members of RPRD note that the Senate Communications Directorate is responsible for supporting committees in developing communication strategies to promote the work of Senate committees.

APPENDIX A – Witnesses

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Shaila Anwar, Clerk Assistant, Committees Directorate (*Senate of Canada*)

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

The Honourable Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

The Honourable Senator René Cormier, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages

The Honourable Senator Brent Cotter, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

The Honourable Senator Mobina S. B. Jaffer, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

The Honourable Serge Joyal, P.C., former senator, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

The Honourable Senator Rose-May Poirier, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

The Honourable Senator Peter M. Boehm, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

The Honourable Senator Percy E. Downe, former Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

The Honourable Senator Peter Harder, P.C., Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

The Honourable Senator Salma Ataullahjan, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates

The Honourable Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

The Honourable Senator Rosa Galvez, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources

The Honourable Senator Nancy J. Hartling, former Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

The Honourable Paul J. Massicotte, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

The Honourable Senator Patricia Bovey, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

The Honourable Senator Ratna Omidvar, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

The Honourable Senator Chantal Petitclerc, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

The Honourable Senator Judith G. Seidman, former Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

The Honourable Senator Robert Black, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

The Honourable Senator Bev Busson, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

The Honourable Diane F. Griffin, former senator, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

The Honourable Senator Fabian Manning, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

The Honourable Senator Gwen Boniface, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs

The Honourable Senator Tony Dean, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs

The Honourable Senator David Richards, Chair, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

The Honourable Senator Michael L. MacDonald, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications

The Honourable Senator Julie Miville-Dechéne, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

The Honourable A. Raynell Andreychuk, former senator, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

The Honourable Senator David M. Arnot, Deputy Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples

The Honourable Dan Christmas, former senator, former Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples

The Honourable Senator Brian Francis, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

The Honourable Senator Pamela Wallin, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Shaila Anwar, Clerk Assistant, Committees Directorate (*Senate of Canada*)

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

The Honourable Senator Percy Mockler, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance



Imprimé par le service des impressions du Sénat /
Printed by Senate Printing Service

sencanada.ca    