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# **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs**

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**Thursday, May 28, 2015**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Joe Preston**



## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, May 28, 2015

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** Folks, we'll go ahead and get started. We have the minister here today. Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, May 4, we have Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

Minister, it's always great when you can come visit committee. I understand you have an opening statement and will be sharing some stuff with us. Please go ahead and introduce your guests and do your opening statement. We'll get to rounds to questions after that.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister for Democratic Reform):** Thank you very much, everyone, for having me here today. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to introduce Isabelle Mondou and Natasha Kim, both of whom work in the Privy Council Office. They are exceptional public servants and they know more about all of these subjects than I do. I'm very pleased to have them at the table with me. I feel assured to have them at my side.

Without any further ado, Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure to address the committee on the citizen voting act. The bill will strengthen Canada's democracy by reinforcing the integrity of the special ballot voting system and ensuring fairness for resident and non-resident votes. The citizen voting act proposes to reform the vote by mail procedures set out in divisions 3 and 4 of the special voting rules of the Canada Elections Act.

The last major update to these procedures was back in 1993. The citizen voting act is in keeping with the government's objective to strengthen the integrity of our electoral process. It builds on the rules enacted by the Fair Elections Act in June of 2014, a bill with which I know all of you are deeply familiar.

The citizen voting act proposes six key measures to reform the special voting rules in the Canada Elections Act and proposes objectives of integrity and fairness.

First, the proposed legislation creates a single process for residents and non-residents who vote by special ballot. Special ballot voting procedures applicable to resident and non-resident electors will be harmonized. Non-resident voters will no longer automatically receive a ballot at election time, mitigating the risk that ballots will end up with unintended recipients. The citizen voting act requires that non-resident electors wishing to vote by special ballot must apply for one at each election, just as resident electors do now.

Second, the bill stipulates non-resident electors will only receive a ballot for the address at which they last resided in Canada. Non-

resident electors will no longer be allowed to choose the riding in which they wish to vote.

Third, the bill builds on the Fair Elections Act by requiring all electors voting by special ballot, both residents and non-residents, include in the application proof of identity and residence according to the rules that are similar to those set up in the Fair Elections Act. At the moment, proof of residence in Canada is not required for non-residents. This shortcoming will be remedied, and as with other Canadians, proof of prior residence will be required for expatriate voters.

Under the citizen voting act, resident and non-resident electors voting under the special voting rules will have the same three voter identification options available in order to cast their ballots: a government-issued photo identification with name and address; two pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer, one with an address and both with a name; or two pieces of authorized identification with an oath or declaration of residence that is attested to by another properly identified elector from the same riding.

Fourth, the proposed legislation requires that electors voting from outside of Canada provide proof of citizenship. Currently, providing proof of citizenship is required administratively by Elections Canada for non-resident electors. The citizen voting act makes this a legislative requirement, including for resident voters temporarily outside of the country.

Fifth, the citizen voting act extends the special ballot voting procedures to the mandatory post-election audit that was introduced in the Fair Elections Act. As you will recall, we required that the Chief Electoral Officer appoint an auditor to ensure identification rules were administered in the course of a general election. That mandatory audit was to apply to domestic voting. The citizen voting act will see to it that it also applies to those voting from outside of the country. To this end, the Chief Electoral Officer will be required to engage an external auditor to carry it out, and he will also be required to report the results of this audit. The audit will look into election workers' compliance with resident and non-resident special voting procedures after every election.

## ●(1110)

Finally, the citizen voting act adds a new provision authorizing the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to provide the Chief Electoral Officer with information such as the name, gender, date of birth, and address of persons who are not Canadian citizens, for the purpose of cross-referencing registrants in the national register of electors. This is to assist in deleting the names of non-residents from the register who are not qualified to vote. This suggestion came to me from the Chief Electoral Officer. He was concerned that there are people on the voter list who are not citizens, and one of the ways that Elections Canada can identify these non-citizens and remove them from the list is by having data on the identity of non-citizens who reside within Canada. So we have agreed to his suggestion and with the passage of this bill, we will permit the immigration minister to provide the Chief Electoral Officer with that data.

Before concluding my remarks to the committee, I would like to report that, following consultations with Elections Canada, and after looking at some of the issues that were raised during the debate in the House of Commons, the government will be proposing seven minor amendments to the citizen voting act.

First, the current bill provides that the Chief Electoral Officer may authorize types of identification issued by, among others, an entity that is “formed in Canada”. This ensures that identification documents must always be Canadian documents and thus reinforces the integrity of the identification procedure. Moreover, foreign-issued identification is likely to be harder to verify, and in some cases, it could be in another language. This requirement raises concerns that it would be difficult to determine whether an entity is Canadian. In particular, it has been argued that it would be difficult for poll officials to make such a determination.

We have noted the concerns and will be proposing to limit the application of this requirement to only electors voting by special ballot under divisions 3 and 4. This means that front-line officials at the polls will not have to evaluate whether a piece of identification was issued by an entity formed in Canada. Rather, this determination will mainly be required when Elections Canada reviews the identification documents provided by electors with their applications for special ballot prior to election day. In other words, it will apply to those voting by mail and those voting outside of the country, but not at the voting booth.

Elections Canada has access to more resources and will have more time than poll officials to assess whether pieces of identification have been issued by a Canadian entity. I believe this amendment will ensure not only that electors voting by special ballot provide Canadian identification to prove their identity and residence, but also that it will be easier for election officials to verify the acceptability of such identification.

Second, another concern that has been raised relates to the requirement in Bill C-50, the citizen voting act, that residents wishing to vote by special ballot using the attestation procedure to prove residency must obtain an attestation from another elector from the same polling division. For those listening who are not familiar with the complexity of local voting, there are electoral districts that each elect one member of Parliament, but within those districts are polling divisions that break down the voting locations where people

go to cast their ballots. The reason that the distinction is important is that it is much more difficult to find an attester who lives in the same polling division or even to know if that voter lives in the same polling division if you are voting from outside of the country and you are resident abroad. This is not a problem when you're actually voting at the polling division location because you're physically there and the person attesting is physically with you, and they would know very well if they are at their appropriate location.

## ●(1115)

That brings me to the proposed amendment.

Because the requirement would be problematic, we would seek to change the requirement for the fact that the boundaries of the polling divisions are not published by the Elections Canada website until 24 days before the polling day. To facilitate the process, we will propose an amendment to allow non-resident electors voting by special ballot to obtain an attestation from an elector from the same electoral district instead. In other words, anyone living in the same district would be able to act as the attester for the non-resident voter lacking proof of prior address. They will not have to be from the same polling division. These electors will therefore be able to kick-start the registration process from the day the election is called.

The third amendment that we propose, Mr. Chair, relates also to the attestation process. Bill C-50 currently provides that as part of the attestation, resident and non-resident electors voting by special ballot may sign a declaration to prove their residence instead of taking the oath. Those who attest to the residence of an elector who are abroad may also sign a declaration instead of taking an oath. An amendment will be proposed to clarify that the declarations signed by attestors from abroad will not need to be administered by another person. Signing a declaration will be sufficient to prove or to attest to the residence of an elector. This will simplify the process for electors and attestors abroad.

The fourth proposed amendment relates to the proof of citizenship that electors voting by special ballot would have to provide, if making their application from outside Canada. We will clarify the language to specify that proof of citizenship is required when the ballot is being sent outside of the country rather than to special ballot voters within the country.

The fifth amendment relates to post-election audit. Bill C-50 proposes to extend the audit to include voting by special ballot and to give the auditor access to all documents necessary to perform the audit. A technical amendment will be proposed to ensure that the auditor has access to all documents necessary to perform the audit for voting at the polls as well.

Sixth, an amendment will be tabled to mitigate the risk of a voter identification card being sent to Canadians at an address at which they no longer live, which would increase the risk of such cards falling into the hands of people who are not eligible to vote in our elections. This technical amendment will provide that all non-residents will not receive a voter information card. Under clause 3 of the bill as currently drafted, that exception would apply only to some non-residents.

As amendment number 7, finally, we will propose an amendment for resident electors who vote in person through special ballot initiatives. For example, such initiatives could be held at hospitals, universities, or at remote work locations, as has been done in the past. An amendment will enable those electors, like electors who vote at the polls, to present an original piece of identification, and not only copies, as is currently provided by Bill C-50.

I hope that committee members will support these amendments. I believe they are sensible and that they are consistent with the goal of the bill.

I can just wrap up by highlighting the principle at stake here.

Mr. Chair, we believe that people should provide ID when they vote. This ID should show who they are, where they reside, and in the case of people living abroad, where they used to reside. Those people voting outside of the country should be required to prove that they're Canadian citizens. The Constitution does give every Canadian the right to vote, but that right is predicated on citizenship—explicitly predicated on citizenship—and so too should be the identification requirement for those who are casting a ballot from outside Canada's borders.

• (1120)

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you for bringing us this new information.

I'm going to Mr. Reid, for a seven-minute round of questions, please.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. I thought this was a pretty good bill to start with, but your amendments, which are very conscientious, are much appreciated.

I want to go back to the very last amendment you were talking about. You said in your comments that you could now present original identification and not only copies. Is it the case that as things stand prior to your amendment, if I show up with an original document it's impermissible, but if I have a copy of the document it is permissible? Is that what you meant to say?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I think this deals with the wording of the existing statute, which suggests that copies are allowed. But that statute, probably as a result of an oversight, did not mention original documents.

Is that correct? Do you want to clarify that, Natasha?

**Ms. Natasha Kim (Director, Democratic Reform, Privy Council Office):** It's just a clarificatory amendment. It does specify

copies, because in most cases when you're mailing in your documents, it would be by a copy.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Okay. It's just that I'm used to hearing that I need to have my original. If I don't have my original driver's licence with me in my car when the police pull me over... It's that sort of thing. I'm not used to hearing the reverse. It's interesting that it can actually arise in the law.

Minister, one of the things that has been a frustration to me as we've gone through this bill and the more general updates that you made to the Canada Elections Act about a year ago is that in critiques of the legislation, critics have been happy to point out the constitutional right that all Canadians have to vote and to stress the importance of going to extraordinary measures to make sure that every Canadian who is constitutionally permitted to vote is not deprived in some form or other of that vote, without any regard being given to the fact that there is another side to this problem.

In the event that someone gets to vote illegitimately, to vote in more than one riding, to "riding shop" and choose to have their vote go not to the riding in which they resided when they were last in Canada but rather to the riding in which their vote is most likely to make a difference... If that sort of thing can go on, then other Canadians can have their vote devalued to nothing by seeing the outcome of that election manipulated.

This never gets mentioned, yet it is clearly the deprivation of every Canadian so affected of their right under section 3 of the charter to have a vote and to have that vote count. I'm glad that you continue to fight this fight, notwithstanding the fact that many of the advocates neglect that key aspect of the issue at hand.

I want to focus a little more closely on the issue of riding shopping. At this point, what will happen, as I understand it, and I'm seeking your confirmation on this, is that, if I leave the country—currently, I live in the town of Perth in Ontario—and want to vote in a future election, I will always be voting based on the address I was last at in the town of Perth, regardless.

So if that town is moved from one riding to another via redistribution, I am attached to that location, not to a particular riding. Is that correct?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** That's right, yes. It's at the address at which you last resided.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Right. To be specific, it's the specific address. The street address would be what I am attached to, effectively.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** That's right.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I appreciate your amendment. I think it's a good amendment, specifying that an attestation only has to come from someone who resides in the same constituency, rather than the same polling division—or poll, as we would colloquially say.

But I have to tell you that I don't think this is a major impediment anyway. It's true that riding maps only come out 24 days before the election—a source of frustration to all candidates, regardless of party—but having gone through a radical redistribution in my past, I can tell you that polling division boundaries don't change. The number that is assigned may be changed. It was poll number one in the old riding map and following a redistribution it's now poll number 50 or 60, but poll boundaries actually don't change.

So while I applaud this, I think this was a bit of a non-problem that you've been presented with, and I wanted to alert you to the fact that this is not really a substantive practical issue.

• (1125)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thanks for that observation.

Mr. Chair, what we had in mind here was not so much that the polling divisions change, but that, in fairness, most people, even politically astute people, don't know what polling division they live in. If I'm voting from, say, the UAE, and I call my friend, who I know lives roughly in the same community—he lives 10 blocks away—he doesn't necessarily know whether I live in his polling division or not. I think there might end up being some confusion in which people would have someone attesting for them who lives three blocks outside of the polling division.

Most people know what riding they're in, generally speaking, or which MP they have, so they can connect those dots a little more easily. But we thought it might be a little bit cumbersome to try to track someone down, then ask them for their postal code, and then go to Elections Canada to make sure that it's exactly the same polling division. We didn't think there was any integrity lost by broadening out the attestation eligibility to the whole riding.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Christopherson. I think you're sharing some of your time.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Assuming there's any to be shared, that absolutely is the intent.

**The Chair:** You've said that in the past. It has always worked out, that's true.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** And my colleague understands.

Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming here today. We appreciate it.

Jumping right into it, the first obvious question we've had of witnesses, including the Chief Electoral Officer, was whether or not the international registry is broken. Nobody so far has said that there is any kind of problem with the existing registry to lead us to eliminate it.

That would be the first question. I'm going to ask you three, and then my colleagues will deal with some of the amendments you've suggested.

So the first question is: if it's not broken, why are you fixing it?

Second is the issue of only being able to apply for your ballot after the writ is dropped. For the life of us, we can't figure out why on earth the government would want to limit the application for a ballot until after the writ is dropped. The Chief Electoral Officer spoke to the difficulty and time-consuming nature of checking all of these

applications to make sure everything is okay. Then to say that you're going to limit it to after the writ is dropped.... Why not allow it at any other time? What is the big prohibition against allowing people to register some time before the actual writ is dropped?

Also, Minister, you made reference to proposed subsection 143 (2.11). You offered a modification, I believe, about the chaos that's going to happen as a result of using language about ID issued by an entity “otherwise formed in Canada”. Originally in the bill, this was going to change in all voting stations right across Canada, not just when voting outside Canada. I understand you're limiting it, but that still just limits the chaos.

The Chief Electoral Officer has said that he doesn't understand why on earth you would have to bring in language that makes it so unclear. Here's what he said, exactly:

First, it's not clear from a legal point of view what this actually means.

I'm making reference, of course, to identification that's “incorporated or formed by or under an Act of Parliament” or of a legislature “or that is otherwise formed in Canada”. We didn't know what that meant.

We asked the Chief Electoral Officer. He said:

First, it's not clear from a legal point...what this actually means. Certainly, it is broader than simply entities incorporated under Canadian law, but what exactly is meant by “otherwise formed in Canada”? Does it include entities incorporated abroad but registered in Canada? What else does it include?

I cannot see how election officials, especially deputy returning officers at ordinary polls, will be able to decide whether a particular bank or credit institution, such as Amex or Visa, was incorporated or formed in Canada.

This is at ordinary polls, but it is still applied to polls outside Canada. We need some clarification there.

I have to say that, as much as Mr. Reid seems to be quite enamoured with this legislation, as far as we're concerned, really this is just the unfair elections act, part 2. There's nothing here, in our view, that helps. In fact, the Chief Electoral Officer started out:

It is clear that these new rules will make it harder for electors abroad to vote.

Now, I remember that this government didn't have an awful lot of respect for the Chief Electoral Officer. When the government completely changed all of our election laws, he wasn't even consulted. But Canadians still care what he says. Given, Minister, that you're saying it's going to help and he says it's going to make it harder for voters to vote abroad, I suspect most Canadians are going to trust an officer of Parliament, the Chief Electoral Officer, rather than the sponsoring minister of Bill C-23.

There are questions in there, Chair. I will leave it to the minister to —

• (1130)

**The Chair:** I know there are. Sometimes you do a very good, effective pause, so I just wanted to make sure that wasn't one of them.

Minister.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you.

It is great to be back in committee with you, Mr. Christopherson.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** I swore you'd be back, Minister.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** All right.

The first question related to the international register of electors. What we propose is to fold its contents into the general voters list. That is because the whole basis of this bill is that we would treat international electors the in same way as special voting electors. In other words, if you have a family member who votes from Florida while they're away as a snowbird, their name is in the basic voters list. As a result of the citizen voting act, an elector who permanently resides in Florida would have the same practice in casting their ballot as your relative who's a snowbird. They'll be following the same rules and the same procedures, and therefore, we propose they be part of the same list. The contents of the international register of electors are not being destroyed; they are simply being put into the voters list, where we have one list instead of two.

The second question dealt with the requirement that a ballot be ordered after the writ is dropped. We haven't found this to be a problem with special voting so far.

Mr. Christopherson, for many years people have voted from all around the world using what's called a special ballot, because they're residents of Canada but happen to be abroad during the election period. They have been very successful at ordering a ballot, receiving it, and casting it by mail before election day. I haven't seen a reason we need to change that. The rule will remain as it has always been, that a ballot is ordered once the writ is dropped and cast before the close of election day.

For your third question, the special voting rule, could you remind me what the actual question was?

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Which? The third one?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes.

**The Chair:** We're going to run out of time right now.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** It was on the "otherwise formed in Canada" unique legislation.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Oh, yes, okay. That's a good question.

The bottom line is that, if you're an international elector voting under the special voting procedure, your ballot will actually go to Elections Canada's headquarters, where there are the resources to ascertain if you are using identification that was formed in Canada. Now this would occur not when the vote is counted but when the ballot is applied for. They have the resources and the time at Elections Canada headquarters to verify whether the identification was formed in Canada. That's something that you can't expect to have as a capability at every voting station across the country. We acknowledge that practical difficulty with the amendment we propose, which ensures that this rule does not apply to those people who are voting in person at a Canadian voting location.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Okay, I'm going to move on to Mr. Lamoureux, for seven minutes, and we'll try to get another round in after this if we watch our clocks.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Thank you.

I have a very quick question to begin with. Would you, Mr. Minister, be open, or maybe even take the initiative, to make an amendment to the legislation that would enable Elections Canada, in any fashion whatsoever, to allow for a registry of those foreign voters prior to the writ being dropped? Is there any movement in your thinking on that particular issue?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I think they are already registered. The ones who are on the international register of electors are already registered.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I meant the actual application for the ballot. I'm sorry.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Oh, you meant the ballot application. As I said earlier, Canadian residents have voted abroad for many years without requiring an advanced ballot order. That has worked reasonably well so far and I'm not sure exactly what problem we would be fixing.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I have a few other questions that I'd like to get on the record but I may make a general observation. Whether you're the Chief Electoral Officer or an individual listening in to the debate or one of the direct members of a political party or whatever it might be, it seems to me that the government is very paranoid about elections and our election laws. There seems to be a fear factor, to a certain degree, such as we hear in the case of "riding shopping", as an example.

When I was in the forces, I took a great sense of pride in the city of Winnipeg. I even maintained a mailbox in Winnipeg, even though I didn't have to, because I had a high sense of pride. That was my community. I was in the forces, so when I was posted to Edmonton, I still maintained it.

There seem to be, I would suggest to you, a number of people, and in particular youth who might be travelling abroad after graduation—they are living with their parents, they might identify more with their community, and their interest is in that community—to whom this legislation is saying, we don't care because we believe that you are going to manipulate by riding shopping, so that you can determine which riding in the country could be won or lost.

Do you not feel that you are taking away from those individuals who have such a high sense of patriotism that they want to be able to engage, want to vote, but also want to be a part of the community with which they are most identified, for whatever reason? Do you not see that this is a negative aspect to the government's approach to the legislation?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** If it is a negative aspect, then it has already affected tens of millions of voters across the country who face the very same requirement that they vote in the place they reside.

I can't simply say, "I live in community X but I really like community Y, so I choose to vote in the latter instead of the former." That's not how our system works. You vote where you reside. This bill simply aligns that principle for those who are casting their ballots from abroad.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I have never heard anyone complain about the international registry, except for Mr. Harper and your government, Mr. Minister. That's the only time I've heard a complaint.

I don't believe that Elections Canada was in any form encouraging the types of changes you are suggesting. Is that not correct?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** We established a principle in the Fair Elections Act that everybody had to present ID when they voted. They had to prove that they resided in the riding in which they were voting. Now we're extending that very same principle to those who cast their ballots from outside of Canada's borders.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** That's right. But you see, Mr. Minister, the operative word there is "we". It's all about we the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister's Office, much like the unfair elections act.

There was no sense of, gee whiz, this is about democracy here in Canada so we should be working with Elections Canada and we should be working with other political entities, and with many different stakeholders who love and have a strong passion for democracy in our country. It's all about the Conservative Party and their need and desire to change the legislation.

Do you not feel that there's an obligation to work with the many different stakeholders who are very passionate about our election laws, before bringing in legislation?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** We always work with stakeholders before introducing legislation.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** No, you don't.

•(1140)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Our approach here is widely supported; 87% of Canadians believe you should be required to show ID to prove who you are and where you live before you vote.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Mayrand appeared before the committee. One of the concerns he stressed, and it's right out of the Library of Parliament report, is that the 60-day coming-into-force period is calling for an exceptionally short period for implementing changes to the electoral process. Specifically he stated that the coordination of information sharing with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the resulting update to the registry would be a lengthy process that could not be completed in 60 days.

Is there any concern whatsoever on your part or the government's part that Mr. Mayrand, who is responsible for elections, could actually be correct, and should you not be concerned about that?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** We want the changes contained in the citizen voting act to be in effect for the next election. We believe that people should prove where they resided, who they are, and that they are citizens, before they vote. That is why we put forward this bill. We hope that the Chief Electoral Officer will cooperate with Parliament to implement the bill prior to the next election in the timeframe that is set out in the bill.

**The Chair:** I'll tell you that you have 20 seconds left, but Kevin, I know you can't do a question in 20 seconds, so I'm going to move on.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Are you planning an ad campaign on this.

**The Chair:** That would be a good idea.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** It's an interesting suggestion. Normally you're attacking us every time we bring forward advertising, and now you're asking for more of it. Sometimes I have a hard time keeping track of the Liberal position on advertising, but that is a historic problem for the Liberal Party.

**The Chair:** I let that happen and I shouldn't have. Thank you very much.

We're going to move to a four-minute round, and if we stay tight on the four minutes.... It's probably going to be three minutes, folks, just so we can get it done.

Minister, we're going to have to stop at about five minutes to the hour. The bells will be going shortly after that. The committee has about a couple of minutes' worth of work, so we'll excuse you at that time.

For a three-minute round, Mr. Richards starts.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** All right. That's a short round.

**The Chair:** That's asked and answered in the three minutes.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Okay, that's good to know. I'll be quick, then.



Minister, according to Elections Canada estimates there are approximately 40,000 non-citizens who are currently on the national register of electors. That means, obviously, that receiving voter information cards that would tell them how to vote would certainly mean, upon arriving at a polling station, that they could be permitted to vote legally because they had received this information.

I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about how Bill C-50 solves that particular problem. Then I have one other question.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** This is a very important question. As you know, citizenship is the basic key that unlocks voting rights in this country. That's what the Constitution says in black and white. The Chief Electoral Officer informed me that there are tens of thousands of non-citizens who are on the voters list. He asked for access to Immigration Canada's data on non-citizens who are in Canada. The bill authorizes that transfer of information and will hopefully allow us to remove those thousands of non-citizens from the list.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Thank you.

The other thing I want to touch on is what I would say is a double standard that exists currently for those who are voting abroad. For Canadian residents who are applying for special ballots, who are obviously in Canada, there's a different standard from what's being currently applied for those who are not resident in Canada. When they apply for a special ballot during an election, they're subsequently sent a ballot for all future elections, in my understanding.

Obviously that would be a double standard. I'm wondering whether you can tell us a little bit more about how this bill fixes that.

I also notice that you have an amendment that was presented today that addresses this to some degree. Would you tell us a bit more about how it would be addressed, both in the bill and in the new amendment that you suggested today?

• (1145)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** If you have a Canadian who spends summers in Florida but is resident in Canada, and next door you have someone who is resident in Florida but has a Canadian citizenship, the second household will automatically get a ballot in the mail under the status quo, without registering. The second household has the opportunity to choose which riding in which to vote. The first household has to order a ballot at each election and has to vote in the riding in which they reside back in Canada.

So two households, side by side on the same street in a foreign neighbourhood, have two different procedures. We're basically putting them under the same procedure, on the same list, with all the same rules. We think that's fair.

**The Chair:** I'm going to stop you there. That's close enough.

Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Latendresse—for three minutes, if you can, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I have a number of questions for you and I'm going to try to get them all out in the three minutes I have. I want to make sure I fully understand how the process works when an elector living in the same riding attests to the place of residence of an elector who is abroad. I'm not talking about the same polling station.

For example, in the case of a family living abroad where the parents of one of the members of the couple still live in the riding, that person's parents are allowed to make a declaration for only one of the two people in the couple, and no more than one person. Is that correct?

[*English*]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** That means, then, that in the case of two parents with two voting-aged children, those children will each have to find someone from the same riding to make a declaration proving that they indeed used to live at that address.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes, if they don't have any proof of residence themselves. If, for example, members of the family have a piece of identification showing their old address, they wouldn't have to find someone to attest to the fact that they indeed used to live at that address.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Of course. But in the case of a family that has been living abroad for 10 years, every time an election is held, they are going to have to go through the same process to prove their former address in Canada. They are going to have to find electors to attest to their last place of residence in Canada. They're going to have to go through that process every single time and only once the election is called. Is that correct?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** They will have to follow the same rules as every other Canadian who votes here in Canada.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Aside from making it a lot harder for people living abroad to vote, is there a reason for applying the same rules across the board? Every witness who appeared before the committee on the International Register of Electors and our voting system said there were no problems with the current situation, no issues with fraud, no problem with the procedure.

Apart from applying the rules across the board as a matter of principle, is there any actual reason warranting the change? Is there the slightest indication to suggest that the system will work better or somehow be improved?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** One of our democratic principles is equality. Canadians clearly have to provide proof of residence as well as proof of their identity in order to vote. I can't see why Canadians living in Canada should have to follow those simple rules but not those living abroad.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Because the two situations are different. Electors living abroad can provide proof of residence in the country where they are currently living. But it would likely be difficult for them to provide proof of an address where they lived 10 or 20 years ago.

We were told very clearly that if the elector is able to provide proof of where they lived in Canada and if their parents or sibling, say, still lives there, that information will remain on the register as long as there hasn't been a change. If the person comes back to Canada and moves to another riding, that's one thing, but until then, why not keep the register as it is now in order to make it easier for these electors to vote rather than harder, which is what Bill C-50 does?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** The logistical problem you just pointed out is exactly why the bill allows electors to have someone in the same riding vouch for them in order to prove their last place of residence.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm not even going to give the governing party their last period of time. I think we'll thank the minister for being here today.

Thank you for sharing with us and for bringing information to us.

We will suspend just for a minute, please. We'll have a quick discussion. We probably should go in camera, but we won't. We'll go very quickly to a conversation we have to have about informing the independents about a report that's coming back from this committee.

We'll suspend for about three minutes, so don't go anywhere.

• (1150)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, and we thank the minister for that part of the morning.

This day is going to be a little choppy. We have a vote in about four minutes.

Right now, we are working diligently to present the report. I'm being very careful because the report is still in draft form and is confidential, so I want to make sure.... We need to inform the independent members of the House about the process of the report on the code of conduct for members.

I'm asking this committee for a method to do this.

Mr. Scott.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Quite simply, I think we need an in camera session or a partial session of the committee where all independents are invited to be briefed by whomever you think makes sense, whether by yourself as chair or by other members, and maybe by Monsieur Parent, who's going to be the lead actor in a lot of this.

**The Chair:** Are we suggesting that on June 4th, as that was the date we'd all thought of, we carve out maybe 15 minutes and invite the independents, and they come—

**Mr. Craig Scott:** I would say it might take a bit more than 15.

**The Chair:** Half an hour...?

**Mr. Craig Scott:** It has to be a bit in their hands because we need to respect the independents' need to say that this report, when it finally becomes public, is something they can support so that it can easily get through the House.

**The Chair:** Great. Are we all agreed we can meet that day?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** All right, good. We're about to go to bells, after which the Speaker will be coming. We've asked the Speaker if he could spend a little extra time with us after our one o'clock hour. I think that's the intent.

Let's go to votes. Then we'll come back here as quickly as we can, please, and we'll get to the estimates piece. They have to be reported back tomorrow, so we have the Speaker and we'll finish today if we can, please.

Thank you.

• (1150)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1245)

**The Chair:** We'll call our meeting to order.

We're here with the Speaker and his team on main estimates 2015-16, on the vote under House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you'll have an opening statement and will introduce your guests. Then we will ask you some questions. We'll try not to keep you too long today. I have word that you will stay a little bit past, because of our votes. If you would, that would be great.

Please, go ahead.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Thank you so much. It's always a pleasure to come before this committee and to present the main estimates.

I'm pleased to be here today with the acting clerk, Marc Bosc, and Mark Watters who, you will remember from the last time we were here, is the chief financial officer. We are also joined by Stéphan Aubé, chief information officer; Philippe Dufresne, law clerk and parliamentary counsel; André Gagnon, acting deputy clerk, procedural services; Benoit Giroux, director general for parliamentary precinct operations; Patrick McDonnell, deputy sergeant-at-arms and director general of the protective service; and Pierre Parent, chief human resources officer.

Today I will be presenting the House of Commons main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A) for 2015-16. I'll begin with a presentation of the main estimates and will conclude with the information for supps (A).

The 2015-16 main estimates total \$443,449,000. This represents an increase of 7% over the 2014-15 main estimates funding levels.

[Translation]

For reference purposes, you have received a document outlining the year-over-year changes for the main estimates between 2014-15 and 2015-16. I will proceed by providing an overview of each line item in the main estimates along four major themes: budgets for members, House officers and presiding officers; House Administration; electoral boundaries redistribution; and employee benefit plans.

I will start with the budgets for members, House officers and presiding officers.

At its meeting of March 3, 2014, the Board of Internal Economy acknowledged an increase of 2.2%, effective April 1, 2014, to members' annual sessional allowance and additional salaries. This funding is statutory in nature and is in accordance with provisions in the Parliament of Canada Act. The increase amounts to \$1.2 million for all fiscal years beginning with 2014-15.

[English]

There are also several items in the main estimates that relate to the House of Commons administration.

The first item included under this theme is funding of \$5.7 million that is required for ongoing maintenance and life-cycle replacement costs for information technology assets resulting from the long-term vision and plan. This plan will result in modernized buildings and information service platforms for parliamentarians over the next 25 to 30 years, ensuring the continued availability of appropriate space and services.

Next, as you know, improving the disclosure of members' expenses has been an ongoing priority for the board. The members' expenditure reports are now published on a quarterly basis and provide considerable enhancements in the reporting of travel and hospitality expenses that are intended to ensure alignment with the Government of Canada's proactive disclosure of ministerial expenses.

To this end you will note that the main estimates allocate \$3.3 million for fiscal year 2015-16 and subsequent years to sustain improvements in the public reporting of members' expenditures. Permanent funding is required to expand claim processing and verification, as well as monthly and quarterly reconciliation processes, to respond to additional inquiries from members' offices and to ensure an appropriate level of support and training for members and staff.

●(1250)

[Translation]

The main estimates also include temporary funding in the amount of \$758,000 for the 24th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum. This upcoming conference for parliamentarians representing the 27 member countries of the Asia-Pacific region will be an excellent opportunity to foster parliamentary diplomacy, advance Canadian objectives internationally and showcase Canada's west coast. Planning is already well under way for this meeting that will take place in Vancouver in January 2016.

[English]

The main estimates also allocate additional resources related to security. Security within the parliamentary precincts has always been a priority, but in the wake of the incident last October and heightened terrorist threats, an enhanced security posture has been necessary. To fund the arming of all House of Commons uniformed protective service personnel, temporary funding in the amount of \$932,000 was requested through the supplementary estimates (C) for fiscal year 2014-15. Permanent funding of \$533,000 is required for fiscal year 2015-16 and subsequent years.

If the committee would permit, I would also like to provide a brief update on some of the other advances that have been made to enhance security for parliamentarians, employees, and visitors to Parliament Hill.

In the coming weeks we'll be finalizing our review of the internal and external reports that have come as a result of the attacks on October 22. I will be reaching out to key stakeholders, including the board, caucuses, independent members of Parliament, House administration employees, and others to provide what information they can about this terrible incident and the steps we have taken to help reduce risks in the future.

While for our own security I am limited in the amount of specific detail I can provide about our security posture and some of the improvements to the physical security of our buildings, I can say that work on conducting an independent security assessment is progressing well. Further, we have implemented a program to oversee and monitor security enhancements and various physical security upgrades to buildings in the precinct and they are progressing as planned.

[Translation]

Recently, it was announced that there are new protocols in place for visitors to Parliament Hill. Tickets are now required to visit the Peace Tower, the Memorial Chamber and the East Block. Additionally, visitors are only permitted to bring one bag into the Parliament buildings and there is a size restriction. Ticketing and bag check services are offered at no charge at 90 Wellington Street, across from Parliament Hill.

[English]

Security at constituency offices has also been a focus of our attention, and we have worked with members and their staff to assess and enhance these particular security needs. The deputy sergeant-at-arms and director general for the protective service contacted hundreds of local police departments across the country in communities where constituency offices are located to ensure that these premises will be regularly patrolled and included on the priority response list.

I'm especially pleased to report that the progressive development of an emergency notification system has begun. Once it is fully deployed, this system will be able to reach all parliamentarians and employees to provide reliable information and clear instructions should there ever be an emergency in the future. These important messages will be able to be simultaneously transmitted through email, voice message, text message, and desktop pop-ups.

Finally, as you know, last October I requested that the Ontario Provincial Police conduct an independent investigation into the death Michael Zehaf-Bibeau. The OPP has completed its investigation and I have received a copy of the report. A redacted version will be available to the public in the coming weeks. The House of Commons incident response summary will also be released to provide additional context on the events of October 22 and to provide further detail about the improvements that have been taken to enhance security in the precinct in recent months.

[*Translation*]

Returning to the main estimates, an additional \$78,000 in compensation has been allocated for House Administration employees. This funding specifically covers the 1% economic increase approved in 2013-14 for senior managers, in line with the economic increase granted by the Treasury Board to its senior management.

Additionally, the main estimates provide a \$22,000 increase for pages' remuneration. Compensation for our pages increases in lockstep with the average increases in tuition fees at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. I have no doubt that we all want to ensure the page program remains competitive and continues to attract the brightest and the best from across the country.

You will note that the main estimates also reflect reductions for two instances of temporary funding following the hosting of two parliamentary conferences: \$227,000 for the 40th Annual Session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, which took place in July 2014; and \$167 million for the 11th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, which was held in October 2014. This funding for these two very successful conferences is no longer required.

● (1255)

[*English*]

We'll now move on to funding that is allocated for the electoral boundaries redistribution. Following the latest census, 30 new constituencies will be added for the next general election. To address the financial implications of these 30 new constituencies, the main estimates include temporary funding of \$17.5 million for fiscal year 2015-16 and permanent funding in the amount of \$24.5 million for fiscal year 2016-17 and subsequent years.

This funding takes into consideration requirements for members, including pay and pension, travel, telecommunication services, office budgets, and parliamentary and constituency office expenditures, as well as additional funding requirements to enable the House administration to support the institution and to ensure the same level of service for the expanded membership.

The final item that is included in the main estimates is an increase of \$967,000 to employee benefit plans for fiscal year 2015-16 and subsequent years. This is a non-discretionary statutory expense that, in accordance with Treasury Board benefit rates, has been adjusted from 16.5% of salaries to 16.8% of salaries effective April 1, 2015.

Let me turn now to supplementary estimates (A).

[*Translation*]

This now concludes our overview of the House of Commons' main estimates.

I would now like to speak about the House of Commons' request of \$15,981,000 for supplementary estimates (A). This request includes funding for 5 items.

The first item addresses funding in the amount of \$1.2 million for the increase to members' annual sessional allowance and additional salaries, which became effective April 1, 2015. This funding is statutory in nature and follows an index published by Employment and Social Development Canada. The funding request associated with this 2.3% increase for 2015 also takes into account the impact of 30 additional members following the next general election.

[*English*]

The second item included in the supplementary estimates (A) is for \$6.5 million for the implementation of new security measures across the parliamentary precinct. This includes the measures I referred to earlier and other actions taken as we continue to assess our security posture within the precinct.

The third item, for which funding of \$3.8 million is requested, pertains to the increased resource requirements resulting from the commissioning of the Sir John A. Macdonald Building and the building at 180 Wellington Street as part of the long-term vision and plan.

The fourth item also relates to the House of Commons' commitments emanating from the long-term vision and plan. Specifically, funding of \$2 million is required for the maintenance and life-cycle costs of building component assets.

[*Translation*]

The final item included in supplementary estimates (A) is for funding of \$2.4 million for the economic increases for House Administration employees. The agreement provides economic increases of 1.5% for 2014-15, 0.75% for 2015-16 and 0.75% for 2016-17. The funding will be used to cover economic increases for employees of the Protective Service, the Procedural Clerks and Analysis and Reference sub-groups, the Technical group and unrepresented employees at the House of Commons.

[*English*]

This concludes my overview of the House of Commons 2015-16 main estimates and supplementary estimates (A). At this time I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

**The Chair:** Super. We'll do that very quickly, then, with a seven-minute round starting with Mr. Lukiwski.

● (1300)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Speaker Scheer, Mr. Watters, Mr. Bosc for being here. It's always good to see you again.

There are lots of questions and so little time. Let me start off with this.

One of the major expenditure items in both the mains and the supps is what you categorized as the long-term vision and plan. A major part of that is the new construction going on in the West Block—and also a couple of other buildings. But I want to focus on West Block. We're planning, I understand, to be in there in 2017. The new House of Commons would be there.

Could you give us an update as to the progress being made? Are we on time, on budget? What are the timelines to move everyone out of this place and into the new place?

As a final request, I would love, frankly, speaking on behalf of all of our colleagues on the government side, and I'm sure members of this committee would agree, to have a tour to see what progress is being made. Is there any way that you would be able to accommodate such a request, so that at least this committee, which represents all of our members, would have a chance before we rise for the summer to take a look at the construction and at what is happening to the new House of Commons?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** For the specific aspects of where we are in the construction and rehabilitation process, I'll turn it over to Marc and he can give us an update.

In response to your last question, I'd be happy to arrange for a tour. I was able to take a tour about a year and a half ago now with the Board of Internal Economy. All the board members were walked through. It was amazing. For those of you who have been in the West Block or have had offices there, we saw it right down to the bare bones, right down to the red bricks and steel girders, before they started putting things back. It was very interesting to see. It was completely unrecognizable, for those of you who have walked through it. It's a tremendous amount of work. I can't overemphasize how much work goes into completely removing everything from the structure and then putting it back in.

We will work with your committee chair to schedule an appropriate time that fits in with the construction cycle as well. We'll start coordinating that, and then I'll ask Marc to fill in on the specifics of your question.

**Mr. Marc Bosc (Acting Clerk, House of Commons):** With regard to your question about whether the project is on time, Mr. Lukiwski, right now we're looking at 2018, which is on schedule. Of course, Public Works is the main manager of the project. We work in close partnership with them. We have a staff of people who are dedicated to this initiative, and they work very well together.

As you can imagine, a project of this size and scope entails a vast number of details that are daily being dealt with, and we're always working several months and years ahead of the actual deadlines. On the whole, the project is progressing very well.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I know we've heard these numbers before, but I'd be interesting in your refreshing my memory. What are we talking about in terms of total costs for the renovations of West Block?

**Mr. Marc Bosc:** I'm not in a position to really answer that question. This is properly directed to Public Works as the main driver for the renovations.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Okay. Thank you.

Can you tell me this, then? Is everyone who currently has an office in Centre Block going to be relocated, or are we just talking about a renovation of the House of Commons itself?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** The entire Centre Block will be vacated, both the House and the Senate side, both chambers, and all the offices.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I assume you have a working plan already for the timeline for how long that move would take place and when it might commence. Could you share any of those details with us?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I stand to be corrected by the people who work more on this on a day-to-day level, but it can't begin until West Block is finished, because we need to have a place to move members into, and obviously the chamber has to have a place to go to.

As Marc mentioned, the timelines are being met, so the expectation is that once West Block is completed, the move can start here.

**Mr. Marc Bosc:** If I can just add to that, I think it's important to note that the handover date of the building by Public Works to the House of Commons doesn't mean that's the occupancy date. We need to do a lot of work leading up to the actual occupancy, whether it is a fit-up or a final correction of minor defects and the like. That can take several months, so it's a little premature to say exactly when that final day will be. Hopefully it will be in 2018, as predicted.

● (1305)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I'll switch gears a bit.

I noticed in your main estimates that there are a couple of items where you're actually returning money, which is always a good thing. You're under budget. In particular, on a couple of conferences, the amounts are fairly significant.

By my tally, you were under budget by close to \$400,000 between the two conferences. That also begs the question, then of why. Was it overbudgeting? Was it an error? Was it something where you were able to enact some cost savings when you actually went to these conferences? Do you anticipate that in future you would be able to see more of these cost savings in frugal expenditures by your office?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** If I could clarify that, these aren't reductions because the conferences came in below expected costs. These are represented there simply because when the funding was sought to host them in the first place, it was sought in the main estimates. Now that the conferences have been completed and we're not going to host them again, they're being taken out of the main estimates. We can certainly come back with information about the actual line item costs and what they ran to.

When parliamentary associations or international forums come for approval to be hosted, we do a lot of work to make sure they're done in a frugal way. There's always a budgetary process that looks at keeping costs in line and at practical considerations.

We can certainly come back on that specific item, but the reason you're seeing that reduction in the main estimates is simply because it was held and it's not being held again. They're being removed from the main estimates.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thank you. We'll cede our time, then.

**The Chair:** All right.

Mr. Scott, please, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being here.

Mr. Speaker, you indicated that around \$6.5 million will be needed for implementing new security measures and you described some of them. Others, obviously, you can't. Quite obviously, as estimates, this dovetails with aspects of the budget implementation act, wherein there's a new organization of security on the Hill with regard to something called the parliamentary protective services, the PPS. That's what we're now going to be calling it, PPS.

It won't be any surprise to you that at least this opposition party has some concerns about how all of this could play out. It's important for everybody to know that the new bill requires that the new director of the PPS be an active member of the RCMP, who will serve under the dual authority of you and I believe the Speaker of the Senate. Apart from the PPS being entrusted with security throughout the precinct and on the Hill, there's also some reference to "an arrangement" for the RCMP as an independent entity to somehow fit into all of this.

The employees association for the House of Commons protective services has just appeared before the public security committee to express some of its concerns, and I think they relate to how well this money is going to get spent. Are there problems?

Ultimately, they say, "Our concerns about upholding parliamentary privilege remain", and the organization "does not believe that it is in the interest of our democracy to give control of security within the Legislative power to the Executive power, this said"—and this is important—"with the utmost respect for the quality of the work of the RCMP in its primary mission—which is not the protection of the Parliamentary Precinct." That's the concern that's been put on the table by the current people who are protecting us within the buildings as such, and I think we need to take them seriously.

The first question I have is this. Is it clear from the way this has now been structured that you, as Speaker, and the Speaker of the Senate will jointly be in charge of appointing, or deciding, and/or recommending the new director of the service? Is that clear? Or could that turn out to be something that comes from elsewhere in the system?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** I can touch on a couple of points or areas in your remarks.

As we all know, a motion was passed by both the House and the Senate back in February requesting that each respective Speaker

begin the process. You probably have the wording there. It had two aspects. One was to have the overall direction of security on the Hill be taken over by the RCMP, but in a way that would not only respect the rights and privileges of members and the institutions but also protect the employment of the existing House of Commons and Senate security officers.

After that motion was passed, Speaker Housakos and I had the opportunity to meet with Commissioner Paulson to do exactly what the motion asked us to do. We had a very robust discussion on all the things you've just mentioned. My impression of that meeting and the ongoing discussion is that all the partners on the Hill want to make this work. There's a real desire to accommodate those concerns through the lens of improving security. We've had great cooperation going back and forth, including the drafting of an MOU that would flesh some of this out and that maintains the position of both Speakers as the embodiment of the powers of each House and the rights of each House.

• (1310)

Because the budget implementation bill is still before the House, I can't go into too much more on that. It has to be passed and receive royal assent, so I don't want to get too far down the road on that.

But I can tell you, based on the discussions we've already had with RCMP personnel in looking at how this will work, that there is a great spirit of cooperation and mutual respect on both sides. I'm confident that we'll get to a place that satisfies both the concerns of individual members and the need for security, and in a third way, recognizes the great contribution the men and women of our security forces played on October 22, played before October 22, and continue to to play today.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you. I respect the way you've had to answer that, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time, with respect, it hasn't directly answered the question of whether or not the selection of the head of the PPS, who has to be an actively serving RCMP officer, will be for you and the Senate Speaker. Could that somehow end up as the association is concerned? I quote:

It is entirely possible that this "arrangement" [within the budget bill] provides that the decision-making level in the selection process lies somewhere in the RCMP, somewhere in the [Privy Council Office], or within the Department of Public Safety... which would appear to [the employees association] to be yet another dent into parliamentary privilege and into our democratic system.

We could ease their concerns if we knew that the appointment of the director of the PPS, an RCMP officer, is actually the choice of you and the Speaker of the Senate.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes, the Speakers are fully involved in the search and selection process. As you know, the act that is before you prescribes that it has to be a member of the RCMP, but beyond that, the Speakers have to be satisfied that they are the right person for the job.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's another concern. There's going to be a triple reporting mechanism for the head of the PPS: the Speaker of the Senate, you, and I guess the head of the RCMP, or the deputy commissioner, perhaps, for federal policing of the RCMP. It's not at all clear how the coordination will take place. One of the concerns that the employees association for the current House of Commons protective service has expressed is, "The triple-allegiance—

**The Chair:** Mr. Scott...?

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Could I just read the quote?

**The Chair:** Really fast, because you're now out of time.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Okay. I quote:

The triple-allegiance of that person...[the head of the PPS]...would inevitably create a conflict, since the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and oaths made under this legislation would compel the new PPS Director to disobey the House or Senate Speakers, and obey only the Commissioner of the RCMP.

I'm just putting it on the record on behalf of the employees association that this continues to be a concern for them.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Lamoureux for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do have a few very technical questions that I would like to start off with by asking Mr. Watters, if I may.

Then I have a question for you, Mr. Speaker.

What we need to appreciate is that what we're reviewing, of course, are the main estimates for 2015-16. Do these estimates factor in the anticipated recovery of the \$2.7 million from some of the NDP members for inappropriate use of parliamentary resources related to the satellite office?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons):** These are actually spending estimates, so they represent expenditures of funds against a budget. The issue of a recovery would be a receivable. That would be a balance sheet item, not an expense statement item. They would not include that because of the simple fact that we're talking about net new expenditures.

•(1315)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Right.

Could you provide the committee an update on the recovery of the \$2.7 million from the NDP members?

**Mr. Craig Scott:** On a point of order—

**The Chair:** Mr. Scott.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** —this is quite obvious. Mr. Watters himself has said why this question is completely out of order. This has nothing to do with the estimates and I would ask you to please rule it out of order.

**The Chair:** I will allow us to carry on. We've been fairly flexible whenever we're looking at estimates, and certainly even with the Chief Electoral Officer we got off into talking about whether it was election maps or other things.

Keep it within bounds, Mr. Lamoureux, if you can, please. Keep it to spending, if you can. I'll be a little more flexible, but not too much.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** I appreciate the latitude, Mr. Chairperson.

In regard to the expenditures, in order to achieve expenditures, we have a balance. There are often moneys being spent in budgets that you have to attempt to recover at times, so when a member does inappropriately spend money out of their MOB, there is a process to collect it. It's bylaw number 20. I can read it for all committee members. It states:

If a Member is 90 days or more in arrears in an amount owed to the House of Commons, the Chief Financial Officer may deduct the amount in arrears from any amount to be paid by the House of Commons to the Member, except a payment under section 55.1, 62.1, 62.2, or 62.3 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

Can you confirm that at the end of the 90 days the House administration will take the actions described by bylaw number 20 to recover these funds? Also, can you confirm whether or not it is in your discretion to withhold severance or pension contributions?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** Mr. Chair, that matter is before the Board of Internal Economy right now, so the board is dealing with that matter.

I think that's going to be my answer on that. I have nothing further to add, really.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Okay.

Typically—I'm going to assume that this is not the first time it has occurred—when a member of Parliament inappropriately spends on whatever it might be, there is an expectation that the money would be returned. The regulation specifies a specific time. Could you walk me through what would typically happen? If I inappropriately spent \$300 on an ad, your office would tell me that I have to pay it back. Is that not correct?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** Yes. In most typical situations, those where there's perhaps a disagreement on an amount that's claimed, the staff of finance works with the member to either receive a cheque for an amount that's been.... If the amount has been previously disbursed, we would recover directly from the member or we might short a claim payment for a subsequent payment to a member.

Those are the most typical situations. They typically don't even go before the board, because it's pretty well a matter of whether something was allowed or not under the manual of allowances and services. If somebody over-claims for something, the adjustment is made rather immediately. We don't get into the provisions of the bylaws that you were just speaking of. Those adjustments are made, I guess, on the spot, that kind of thing.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Right. But typically, if I owe MOB \$500 or \$1,000 and for whatever reasons I'm not refunding the MOB, what actions are you going to take to ensure that I refund it?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** You'd probably get a call from the chief financial officer if that were to happen. Usually that results in the payment of a cheque.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** You would personally be contacting me, saying, “Look, you owe us some money.”

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** In the rare times that's happened in the past, that's what we've done. Typically the payment has been made.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Have you ever had a situation where it has not been made?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** In the situations we've just been talking about, where there's an issue with MOB moneys being spent in that particular way, I think we pretty well have collected everything we've needed to collect from members.

• (1320)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Right. If you have a problem in terms of collecting it, then you could ultimately fall back on the rule that says you have 60 days, I believe, or 90 days in order to make payment. At some point you can say, “Look, you have 90 days to pay it back.”

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** It's actually bylaw 20 that talks about a member being more than 90 days in arrears. We would first determine that there's an arrears, that this amount is due for collection—as I said, this has typically not happened in the past—and then the chief financial officer may deduct from any payment other than, as you were saying, sessional allowances, additional salaries, salaries for parliamentary secretaries, the additional salaries for the leader of the opposition, recognized parties, House leaders, etc. Those are amounts that we cannot touch. Under these provisions of the bylaws, we would reduce claims.

That's done routinely, I suppose, on small adjustments on claims. A member might send in a claim for, I don't know, anything from a few hundred dollars to 1,500 dollars' worth of things. If \$1,400 of the \$1,500 claim is approved, the \$100 that's left is typically netted out against another payment.

We rarely get into this situation. In fact, I have never been faced with this situation since being appointed chief financial officer of the House in August of 2011.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Taxpayers have nothing to be fearful of, in the sense that the office administration will in fact go out of its way to ensure that the taxpayer is protected and the money is ultimately recovered. Is that correct?

**Mr. Mark G. Watters:** That's correct.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Finally, to this—

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux, that's seven minutes.

We have to end things at the bottom of the hour, folks, so let's do a two-minute round and finish it off.

Mr. Lukiwski, you have a couple of minutes.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** In that case, very quickly, Speaker Scheer, you mentioned that you have seen the report on the death of the assailant who stormed Parliament Hill on October 22 and that in a couple of weeks the public would receive a redacted copy of that.

Where do parliamentarians fit into that scheme of things? Are we going to have advance notice? Is our copy, if we get one, going to be redacted, or are we lumped into the category of the general public?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** As you can appreciate, there are a lot of considerations into the best way to make this information public. The

OPP looked at the entire incident. We decided that we would commission our own report, because our own service personnel were not automatically included in the report that was going to be done for the RCMP. Ever since then we've really been trying to work with the RCMP to make sure that we're moving in the same direction and we're working in a complementary fashion.

As you can appreciate, a report that includes the names of security personnel, the names of constables, where people were standing at what time, and where resources were deployed, some of that information would... It would not be appropriate to release that. It would actually do far more damage to security than enhancements, so we're currently in the process of deciding the best way to make that public.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Would parliamentarians get a separate report, or would we be receiving the same report that the members of the general public would?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** It would be the same report.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** The same report...?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Great. Thank you.

I'll move on to Madame Latendresse for two minutes—

**A voice:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Scott, you have two minutes.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Great. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of completeness, I guess, this is more a question of whether you can assuage the concerns of the House of Commons protective services employees association. In their brief this morning to the public security committee, they said that the association “is concerned that the [budget implementation bill] does not uphold the commitment made by the Speaker of the House in his motion”—they say motion, but it was your statement—“of February 25, 2015...guaranteeing the employment of all employees of the House's Protective Services”. They're worried that the bill does not reflect that clear commitment that you made.

I'm just wondering if you have any comments to add.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** As you pointed out, it wasn't a statement that I made. It was a motion passed by the House instructing me to carry out a certain course of action, which I respected, as did Speaker Housakos.

I think you will appreciate that I don't want to be drawn into a debate about a bill before the House. That would be a difficult position for me to be in. I can only assure you and assure members of the House of Commons security detail that every person who has worked on this file since October 22, and indeed February 25, is focused on all parts of that motion: enhanced security under the direction of the RCMP, protecting rights and privileges of members of Parliament in the House, and the employees. Every conversation we have about how best to implement the new system contains that.



We are working in a very cooperative fashion, I have to say. I think it would be fair of me to say that Commissioner Paulson understands this. The RCMP understand it. The individual constables understand it. We're currently working toward a model that respects all those aspects of that motion.

• (1325)

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** I think we'll end it there. We're close enough.

We do thank you for coming and for staying a little longer with us today. I know that oftentimes, certainly with bells, we cause ourselves a fair bit of grief at committee, but we thank you for being flexible and coming—

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, can I just ask one quick question?

**The Chair:** No, you may not.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** With you, Mr. Lamoureux, I know it's impossible to ask a quick question, but I love you dearly.

Thank you for coming today and thank you for sharing with us. Thank you for sharing with us on main estimates. It's an important role of committees to look at estimates.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** It's my pleasure to be here.

Mr. Chair, we had the opportunity to chat last night, and I know you're not presenting in the next election, not running again. I just

want to say what a pleasure it has been for me, as Speaker, to work with you in your position as chair of this committee. This is probably the committee that the Speaker deals with most, and I want to thank you for your service to this committee and to the House itself.

**Voices:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** Thank you and I thank you for last night. It was very good.

Mr. Scott.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** On behalf of the official opposition, especially with so many gathered, which is not that frequent a case with PROC, we would like to thank you for your service. You've been a stellar chair. I don't think anybody here would disagree with that. We wish you well in the future.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, all, and—

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Just for the record, Mr. Chair, we're going to wait for a more appropriate time; perhaps your last meeting.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I was going to say, attending your own funeral has been really tough around here.

Thank you very much.

We are adjourned.

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