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Co-Chairs

Mr. Blaine Calkins

The Honourable Marilyn Trenholme Counsell

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• (1205)

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC)): Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call the meeting to order.

Before we get started, I would just like to make sure everyone has the documents they're supposed to have.

Does everybody have their paperwork in front of them? That's good.

I would like to introduce our witnesses. Mr. Young, the parliamentary librarian, is here, and with him is Lise Chartrand, who is the director of finance. I don't know who else is coming. We expected to see here Sue Stimpson, the director general of corporate services.

A voice: She's here.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Is she? Okay, very good.

And there are some other folks here.

Mr. Young, I would prefer to just leave it up to you to introduce who is here. And due to the limited space we have at the table, during the questioning rounds, if we have to call somebody up to answer a question, Mr. Young, feel free to do so, so that we get the appropriate information we need.

Given that we have a very short timeframe, I'm looking at about a one-and-a-half-hour meeting. We have some committee business that we need to discuss, so I'm looking at about a one-hour period or so during which we can hear your comments, Mr. Young, in regard to the estimates. Then, of course, the remainder of that time will be for questions.

There'll be no particular order for questions. If you want to get on the speaking list, I would certainly encourage you to indicate to one of the clerks that you would like to ask a question, and we'll simply go that way.

Is that all right with you, Madam Co-Chair? Do you have any comments you would like to start with?

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell (New Brunswick, Lib.)): It's excellent to see so many people here. *Bienvenue à tous et toutes.*

This is perhaps the most significant meeting we've ever had, with a turnout like this and interest like this; it's all good.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Well, if we continue to feed people this well, I believe we'll have to look for a larger venue.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): You see, that was perhaps one of my interventions, so this was a necessity.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Without further ado, Mr. Young, the floor is yours.

Mr. William R. Young (Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament): Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon.

I'm pleased to meet with you today to discuss the Library of Parliament's plans and priorities for 2008-09, based on our estimate submissions to the speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons last December.

[Translation]

I am joined by Ms. Lise Chartrand, the library's Director of Finance.

[English]

Around the room is the senior management team for the library. We start with Dianne Brydon. I've just named her interim director general of access and learning. She's been the director of parliamentary public programs. Also here is Jacques Sabourin, director general of the research branch; Lynn Brodie, director general of IDRS; and Allan Darling.

The we have the PBO gang: Mostafa Askari, the new director working for Kevin Page; Sahir Khan, Kevin Page; and Sue Stimpson, who doesn't want to infect you with the flu. We've all been suffering from the flu, so some of us are the walking wounded here this afternoon.

As I had mentioned before, I'd very much like to see this committee evolve into an effective management board for the library. I believe we'd all benefit enormously from your ongoing advice and support for the library's service development agenda.

[Translation]

I understand that committee members have been provided with a copy of our 2008 — 2009 Report on Plans and Priorities, which outlines our ongoing activities and the major initiatives we are undertaking over the coming year.

[English]

The library's operating budget, as set out in the 2008-09 main estimates, stands at \$39.7 million. This represents a net increase of 8.2% over last year's budget, and it's primarily to cover non-discretionary items such as employees' salary and benefits adjustments as a result of collective agreement negotiations with the bargaining groups.

[Translation]

Naturally, the increase in non-discretionary spending over last year reflects our plans for initial implementation of the new Parliamentary Budget Officer functions within the library, in line with statutory requirements set out in last year's amendments to the Parliament of Canada Act.

• (1210)

[English]

It also reflects the modest annual augmentation of our collection budget to accommodate year-over-year increases in publisher and vendor prices for print materials and electronic resources.

Our planned spending related to discretionary items, therefore, amounts to only a 1.1% increase over last year's budget. These new funds will allow us to hire two additional librarians and two analysts to support requests from committees and individual parliamentarians.

In May 2007 I launched a road map for renewing the library centred around three strategic priorities. These have since guided our efforts to rebuild the organization's infrastructure and position it to meet the needs of a 21st century Parliament. They include modernizing our knowledge management capacity, strengthening our management support capacity, and operationalizing a new parliamentary budget officer function.

Over the course of the past year we strengthened our executive management team—most recently by hiring a new director general of the research and the information service, Sonia L'Heureux, who will be starting with us in June. We have also consolidated our corporate services function, adding a new IT directorate that will play a critical role in supporting the development of our electronic products and services to Parliament.

We embarked on a policy modernization program with a view to upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency. We reworked outdated policies related to collections, contracting, and hospitality, and closed policy gaps in important areas such as employment equity and diversity, partnering, and use of the main library building. We also began implementing a planning and reporting framework that will bring a new rigour to the library's objective-setting and performance measurement activities.

[Translation]

We piloted a visiting scholar program, with librarian-scholar Tim Mark, who is sharing his knowledge and expertise on a range of issues of special interest to the library.

We also piloted our new research publication *InfoSeries* with an issue on Afghanistan.

[English]

This is just a sample of our recent accomplishments in support of the library's three strategic priorities. I am particularly proud of the steps we've taken to build our internal capacity. I think we're a much stronger organization than we were 12 months ago.

In 2008-09, as set out in the report on plans and priorities you have before you, we will take further steps to consolidate our infrastructure and improve our accountability and transparency, but our focus will turn to delivering enhanced services to parliamentarians.

This year we will increase our ability to manage and share knowledge by strengthening our internal information management systems, establishing a program of partnership development with academics and other information organizations, and phasing in more systematic consultation with clients about the products and services they need.

Our *InfoSeries* pilot generated an enthusiastic response. This underscores for me the value of developing a research agenda for the library that will help us deliver information and knowledge products on topics as they emerge on the parliamentary agenda. Sustaining such a research agenda will require dedicated resources, and we will be developing a business case this year to spell out our plans for moving ahead on this front. Meanwhile, we are targeting early fall for the second edition of *InfoSeries*, which will address the subject of Arctic sovereignty.

• (1215)

[Translation]

We are also working to integrate improvements to our seminar series within a broader framework of a parliamentary learning program. We have begun developing a major policy orientation session for parliamentarians, and have held some preliminary discussions around the possibility of extending seminars to party caucuses.

[English]

We will take steps to meet our client needs more systematically and strategically, beginning with an assessment of their perceptions of the library and the services and products we offer. Some of you, as joint committee members, will be called upon to share your thoughts and opinions and to explore areas where we can strengthen our programming and enhance our services. This is to take place before June.

To support many of these new initiatives and to reflect the additional roles and responsibilities she has been assigned over the past year, Dianne Brydon will take on the title of interim director general of learning and access services. She will lead the development of a comprehensive new parliamentary learning program; support the implementation of a centralized publishing, editing, and design group; and develop the library's client relations portfolio.

[Translation]

To excel in delivering services and products to parliamentarians, the library staff must work from a foundation of solid governance and management practices. Steps taken over the course of the past two years have significantly strengthened our financial and human resources, and our IT management and planning.

[English]

We remain committed to our objective under Parliament's long-term vision and plan to bring library staff, who currently work out of 10 different buildings, under fewer roofs. Consolidation is vital to facilitating organizational efficiency and ensuring seamless service to Parliament during a period of considerable disruption, as historic buildings are restored across the precinct. So I am very pleased to tell you that Lynn Brodie, director general of our information and document resource service, has accepted a special assignment to focus on long-term accommodation planning for the library.

We must have the proper tools and systems in place to provide clients with access to information and electronically delivered products and services. Sue Stimpson, director general of corporate services, together with Ken Cameron, director of information technology, will guide the development and management of the information management environment within the library over the coming year.

As you all know, Kevin Page, the parliamentary budget officer, assumed his responsibilities at the end of March. He has begun staffing and setting in place the administrative infrastructure to build a team and, to date, has engaged an executive assistant and the two senior directors I introduced earlier. In short order, a national recruitment campaign will be launched to continue to build capacity for this new function and service to Parliament.

[Translation]

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been regularly meeting with parliamentarians and other stakeholders, including this committee, to better articulate the types of services and level of support required.

[English]

The funding pressures for this area, however, are still a relative unknown, and it is uncertain whether they are sufficient to allow the PBO to meet the needs of parliamentarians in this startup year.

Before closing, I'd like to draw your attention to an important matter involving the amendment of Canada's copyright legislation, which, if you believe what you read in the newspapers, may soon be introduced in Parliament. The new Copyright Act is apparently intended to modernize Canada's copyright law for digital works on the Internet and to reflect Canada's obligations under international agreements for intellectual property.

What is missing from the current legislation is a specific exemption from copyright infringement for parliamentary and legislative libraries. Other countries—including Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom—have such an exemption in their copyright acts. I believe Canada's amended Copyright Act should include one.

The Library of Parliament's interest in copyright reform is two-pronged. First, as a tool of parliamentarians, we seek to adjust copyright law in order to enhance its ability to meet the information and research needs of Parliament and parliamentarians. Second, as a library, we share the objectives of other publicly funded libraries for a copyright law that will properly balance the rights of copyright holders and libraries and their clients.

You should have received a copy of a briefing note that I recently sent to the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House on this issue. As it indicates, my staff and I have had preliminary discussions with various government representatives and have prepared some general background outlining how the exemption works in other jurisdictions and explaining the need and rationale for supporting such an exemption in any new Canadian Copyright Act.

I would encourage the members of the joint committee to think about how they might help get this exemption incorporated in our legislation, possibly by reporting back to the House of Commons and the Senate on this matter or by otherwise sharing your views with the speakers and your colleagues. In ensuring that you and your successors have the timely access to information needed to perform your work, you will be doing Parliament an important service.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I appreciate this opportunity to report on the library's plans and priorities. We've set an ambitious agenda for program and service development, but I'm confident that we're on the right path and are building a 21st century library for a 21st century Parliament.

In this vein, and in summary, I'm seeking your support for the direction we're taking to modernize the library, and the modest increase in budget required to ensure that effective service is maintained. I am looking forward to your ongoing collaboration as we pursue initiatives to support parliamentarians.

•(1220)

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you very much, Mr. Young. That was very informative.

I think we should just proceed right into questions. The first person on the list is Senator Oliver.

Senator Donald H. Oliver (Nova Scotia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Young, for your excellent presentation.

I too would like to see this committee become an effective management board for the library. Anything we can do to help the library provide better and more services to parliamentarians is really at the root of my interest and my concerns. I was delighted with the PBO; I think that's going to add one thing.

I have a financial question about your contributions to employees in your benefit plans. We have, in the papers that were sent out to us, a breakdown of the Senate expenses and costs and those of the House of Commons and the library. I would like to know whether the benefits of the employees of the library are the same as those for comparable employees in the House of Commons and the Senate. Are they any higher, are they any lower, are they the same? Or are they as good as?

Mr. William R. Young: The short answer is yes. They are, I think, identical.

Senator Donald H. Oliver: The second major question I have is with regard to your report, where you said that you have embarked on a policy of modernization, and that you have closed policy gaps in such important areas as employment equity and diversity.

You have given us a critical path of the Library of Parliament towards renewal up to 2010, and nowhere in that did I see anything about policies in relation to representation of the four target groups in the library, nor in it did I see anything about policies of diversity.

As you know, it is a major concern of this government. Mr. Paul Tellier and Mr. Don Mazankowski are a task force for the Prime Minister, and their next report will deal with representation. I'm appearing before that committee in a week's time for an hour, and I'm concerned to know what you are doing to make sure that the four target groups are being adequately serviced, protected, and invited to join you in the library.

• (1225)

Mr. William R. Young: Thank you, Senator.

I think you know that employment equity and diversity are very important to me personally, and in fact, setting up a cross-functional group from the library, headed by Benoit Morin, the associate director of parliamentary public programs, was one of the first things I did when I took over. That group in fact put in place, and the library's executive committee adopted about a month ago, the new policy, a framework for how we're going to be dealing with employment equity and diversity. From that policy, there will be a series of appropriate human resources practices developed.

To a large extent, the previous policy was put in place around 1986, I think. We've tried to broaden it and make it as inclusive as possible, but not to restrict it in time by having a policy that would be out of date in another couple of years. It's been passed over to our HR folks, who have been actively working on developing precisely the kinds of approaches you're talking about.

Senator Donald H. Oliver: Can you tell us what your numbers now are for the four target groups: women, the disabled, aboriginal people, and visible minorities?

Mr. William R. Young: I don't have them with me, I'm sorry.

Senator Donald H. Oliver: Is it something you could give to the chairs of the committee?

Mr. William R. Young: Certainly, I would be delighted.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Oliver.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): The next questioner is Senator Tommy Banks.

Senator Tommy Banks (Alberta, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I'm substituting for Senator Rompkey today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Young. You and I have spoken on the phone a few times, but I'm very glad to actually see you.

I have to confess a bias in favour of copyright holders in general. And with respect to the proposals that you're....

Chair, is it appropriate to talk about the copyright matter that Mr. Young raised?

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): Yes, I think we should address everything he's raised.

Senator Tommy Banks: Thank you.

No one would demur from the idea that Senator Oliver put forth, that it's to everybody's advantage that the library provide more and better service to parliamentarians. But reading the note that you sent, referring to the Australian example and others, I see that the exemption that is being sought would have to do with literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works; sound recordings, such as CDs; and movies and television broadcasts. It would provide for more than one copy of these being made at a time, and for their being shared among the parliamentary and legislative libraries.

I have a number of questions. First, what do movies, television shows, CDs, and the like have to do, in the main, with the work of parliamentarians? My bias in our office is that when we need to see something in a magazine or a book, or if we want to watch a video or something, we buy it. I think this would get around the necessity of doing that, and I'm wondering what those things have to do with the work of Parliament.

Mr. William R. Young: Well, certainly CDs are not just limited to entertainment. CD-ROMs are used extensively at this point in time to store and make available data and information. As for television, the proceedings of the House are televised, and those of the Senate are recorded. So there are issues related to both of them.

I'm trying to remember the other pieces that you had questions about. I won't claim to be an expert in copyright. Actually, the person who wrote the briefing note is Kristen Douglas, who is sitting at the table. She has been my legal adviser on this issue.

Senator Tommy Banks: And mine as well, not on this subject but on others.

I understand that we sometimes need to look at rebroadcasts of CPAC or of news coverage and the like, but the wording isn't limited to that. Under this wording, if I want a copy of *The Sound of Music*, and it's in the library—which it must be, according to the Copyright Act, because distributors must deposit a copy—then the Library of Parliament can make me one, and they could in fact make me ten, as it says here.

My second concern is that, at the moment, when a publication does come out and is deposited in a library or when a library acquires one, sometimes, with respect to textbooks and reference books and the like, the publishers of those things are now able to sell to a number of parliamentary libraries in Canada. This would permit the Library of Parliament or the library of the Legislature of Alberta to buy one, make copies of it, and distribute it to all of the other libraries. I have a concern about that.

• (1230)

Mr. William R. Young: I hadn't thought about that.

I don't know, Kristen, whether you have....

Is Kristen permitted to make comments?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): I think there might be some valuable comments here.

Ms. Kristen Douglas (Committee Researcher): I have just a brief comment, Senator. The level of detail you're getting to may not be apparent from this note. But the international examples of copyright exemptions for Parliament or for parliamentary libraries that we've looked at specifically refer to parliamentarians' parliamentary work. In other words, the resources being accessed would have to be related to parliamentary work. They couldn't just be movies that you happen to want to see, to which you'd have free access because you happen to be a parliamentarian; that's not the intention.

Senator Tommy Banks: Good. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Good. I couldn't imagine why you would be interested in that, Senator Banks, but....

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Young and all of his colleagues in the library.

One of the things you stressed in your presentation today is the sea change in management excellence. The library has been noted for quite some time for its excellence in research and outreach, not only to parliamentarians but to Canadians generally. We see that in action.

One of the things you have articulated here is that you've taken on a deliberate course to improve the management processes within the library. For example, I was shocked to actually see that the library's offices and staff are spread over ten buildings off the parliamentary precinct. That must be quite a management challenge.

I was also interested in your comments about the consolidation of editing, typesetting, design services, and so on. That really must still

be a problem when you have people spread over ten different buildings and offices around the downtown core in leased accommodations. These are the kinds of issues that must bring significant challenges to maintaining consistency and quality within the product offering of the library.

I don't know if you want to comment on that, but my last point would be that in order to do all this, you have to spend money to improve efficiency in order to actually get to this point. You're making clear that the discretionary budget of the library has gone up by only 1.1%. Do you have the resources to be able to fulfill this mandate to really improve the process, the management structures, and improve quality and consistency within that kind of a scope?

I'll put it in this context. I asked for and received a briefing document not so long ago that really showed that the resources of the Library of Parliament have not been substantially increased over the last number of years. Yet the demands by parliamentarians on the library have been very significant. There have been not only statutory demands—i.e., for the parliamentary budget officer—but also an increase in representation in the House, and the demands of extra committee work, which is a discretionary demand, but it's still there.

Do you have the resources to get the job successfully done, to improve management processes, and to improve structure while at the same time really keeping up the high-quality work that the library has been known for?

Mr. William R. Young: In my first set of estimates, I went forward precisely with a request for additional funds to beef up the corporate services at the library. As it expanded over the last few years, the library has never put in its budget the traditional or accepted percentage, which I believe is 13% for new employees, for additional overhead costs. So we're still playing catch-up on that one.

We created the new corporate services directorate general, which Sue is the head of; we hired Lise as the director of finance; Paula Ghosh as the director of HR; and a new director of IT. We've been able to scrape by through internal reallocations up to this time; however, you're absolutely correct that particularly in the IT area, a lot of our direct services are provided through an MOU with the House of Commons. We pay them about \$600,000 a year, but it's more for hardware and programming services. What we need is IT architecture that can allow us to build, and there will be significant costs associated with that.

In terms of the research branch, obviously things like the *InfoSeries* publication on Afghanistan that we put out consumed a lot of resources. During our consultations with you and your colleagues, if this kind of anticipatory document is deemed to be valuable there will be additional resource requirements within the research branch. There will be additional resource requirements for the parliamentary learning piece that Diane is trying to put together so a holistic approach to learning can be offered to parliamentarians—an enhanced program for new parliamentarians when they come in, an enhanced seminar program, and all sorts of learning opportunities. There's going to be a significant investment required there.

So in answer to your question, no, I don't. I mean, we've managed to get to the point now where we have some of the significant planning pieces in place, but I'm going to be preparing some business cases—based on the new rigour we're able to bring to this process—and I will be bringing those forward to the speakers and to you, in your capacity as the joint committee that advises the speakers, within the next year, I would suggest, but some of them more quickly than that.

•(1235)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Young.

Mr. Byrne, in an effort to make sure everybody has an opportunity, we have to move along.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): I now call upon the Honourable Mr. Malhi, please.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Young, are you satisfied with the library's public outreach services? And how do you see the renewal process improving the public outreach components of the library's activities?

Mr. William R. Young: On the public outreach, you're basically talking about the parliamentary public programs. The associate director there is Benoit Morin.

Am I satisfied? I think they're doing some wonderful work. A new publication has been prepared and should be coming out shortly, which is for learners of English as a second language. It's really quite spectacular. We're innovating as much as we can there.

The level of satisfaction that we've heard from those people who have participated in our programs is huge. There was an evaluation done last year on the 10th anniversary of the Teachers' Institute, which showed that the teachers who had participated in that—I think most of you have been involved in that program at one time or another—have continued to use that material in their teaching and in their course preparation, and they've served almost as ambassadors within the school systems of the 13 jurisdictions across the country. I think it's a particularly successful part of what we do.

Right now we have 65 new guides in training, and you'll see a whole bunch of fresh faces of the young people we've been able to bring in from all across the country, who are going to be taking people through the Parliament buildings during the summer recess. Again, those programs benefit the young people, and they benefit the tourists and visitors to the Parliament buildings in ways that are like dropping a stone in a pond and looking at the ripples that go out.

There are areas there in which I think we could set up new programming, which I would love to be able to do.

For example, we have the Teachers' Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, but we can look at other areas in which we could possibly set up an analogous program. I would suggest something like librarians, because libraries in communities are the centres of their communities. They participate increasingly as places where people come not just to get books but to hold community activities. Having a librarians' institute on parliamentary democracy would be, I think, very valuable.

It's a long answer, sorry, Mr. Malhi. I hope I answered your question.

•(1240)

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: As my last question, part of this year's budgetary increase for the library is dedicated to increasing institutional capacity for the provision of mandated services. Can you give some examples of how the library will increase capacity in 2008-09?

Mr. William R. Young: The 1.1% discretionary increase has basically been to hire two new analysts to support two new committees, and two new librarians to work in our central inquiries service where the services, particularly the requests from the public to the 1-800 line, have increased hugely. That is basically where that money has gone.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Malhi.

I would now like to call upon Mr. Hiebert, please.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Young, for your presentation.

I have a couple of questions related to staffing, and then I'd like to use the balance of my time to talk about the Copyright Act.

In terms of staffing, how many positions are there in the organization, filled or unfilled?

Mr. William R. Young: There are 347.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: What percentage or what number of those would currently be filled?

Mr. William R. Young: There are 21 vacancies, as I understand it. I believe that's not counting the parliamentary budget officer positions.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Understood.

Is there much of a churn, much of a turnover, in employees?

Mr. William R. Young: We're facing an increasing number of retirements. I believe there are about 24 projected or possible retirements next year. As for the rest, I don't think there's anything noteworthy about the turnover in staff.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: It's either at or below normal turnover within the public service?

Mr. William R. Young: I think so.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Secondary to that, in terms of your outreach, someone asked what you're doing. I'm wondering what you're doing with respect to international outreach. I've had the pleasure or the benefit of meeting with parliamentarians from other countries, and they often ask if Canada would be in a position to assist them in either establishing a Hansard system or providing access to research documents, to which, because of their limited circumstances, they don't have access.

Does the Library of Parliament do any outreach to other countries?

Mr. William R. Young: We participate in what they call the POS program, parliamentary officers' study program, that's put on with the House of Commons and the Senate. We're a partner in that. There are three sessions per year, to which people come from parliaments across the world, many from developing countries. There are usually about 25 participants in that.

In addition, we host a lot of delegations that come, and we put programs on as they request them. There is increasing demand for that; let's put it that way. This summer I am hosting parliamentary librarians from around the world. We're expecting, possibly, 200 to 250 people to come here. We're trying to set those sessions up so that people will have something to take home with them, whether it's a workshop on research, whether it's a workshop on leadership, or whether it's workshops on different subjects. We're trying to do that.

In addition, I have been very active in trying to get the Inter-Parliamentary Union to hold a conference, which they have just agreed to do, with the parliamentary libraries and the secretaries general in October. It's going to be a special day that's going to be tacked on to the IPU meeting that will be held. Senator Oliver probably knows more about this than I do. Again, we're looking at this from a client perspective and a capacity-building perspective.

That is about it. As you know, we support the various parliamentary associations in whatever, as well.

● (1245)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: And you do a very good job of that.

With respect to the copyright exemption, I've reviewed the briefing note. I see a lot of very good arguments in favour of the exemption. It brings clarity to the law. I know that right now there's some uncertainty as to whether or not the library is free to have access to certain materials. It provides improved access to relevant information. It responds to changing technology. It reduces costs. Is there a downside?

Mr. William R. Young: I'm not... Senator Banks is probably your—

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I'm not talking from Senator Banks' perspective but from the Library of Parliament's perspective.

Mr. William R. Young: Quite frankly, I think it's a very positive thing, not just for the library but for parliamentarians, both in terms of containing costs and in terms of making material available for the longer term, which might otherwise be restricted. For example, some of the material we get on electronic databases, say newspapers, we're allowed to retain for one year only. If a parliamentarian wants a search done of that material going back beyond a year, we have to purchase it again.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Fair enough.

Are there any restrictions—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Sorry, but you'll have to keep it brief.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: This is my last question. It's a yes or no.

Would the exemption keep us in line with our international obligations?

Mr. William R. Young: My understanding is that in Australia, they've recently modernized their Copyright Act and legislation regulations, and it has kept them, and been designed, in line with their international obligations. So if they can do it, I don't see why there would be a problem here.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): Madame Savoie.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): I appreciated your presentation, thank you very much.

I think that my question is the same as Mr. Byrne's: to what extent are the Reports on Plans and Priorities realistic? Is it possible to implement them, given the quite modest increase that you have? Where would you allocate that amount as a priority?

Mr. William R. Young: This year, we may need an increase in the supplementary estimates.

[English]

to be able to fulfill some of these objectives. We just had a strategic planning retreat of the senior managers to look at precisely this. I've developed a management objective agenda for the managers. There are six different objectives that we're going to be moving forward on and where we will be developing business cases.

Now, for this year, I think we're okay, but next year

● (1250)

[Translation]

I believe I will need more money. At the same time, that must be based on an appropriate business plan.

[English]

Ms. Denise Savoie: I have a second question. There's a reference in the report to the development of a protocol with government departments to obtain timely information—requested, I imagine, by parliamentarians or otherwise.

At the moment, that seems to be difficult to get. I'm surprised there is no protocol, because the reference is as follows:

[Translation]

the development of a protocol with departments and federal organizations.

Mr. William R. Young: The Parliamentary Budget Officer is in the process of developing the protocol. For the rest of the library, it is a serious problem.

[*English*]

Receiving timely information from government departments is an issue.

Mr. Sabourin is sitting on the edge of his seat. It's an issue that most concerns the research branch and the analysts who work for committees.

[*Translation*]

If there are any comments...

Mr. Jacques Sabourin (Acting Director General, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament): I have a brief comment.

It varies a lot from department to department. There are departments where we get a good response, where they have good parliamentary liaison, and there are other departments where we are more or less ignored.

Naturally, that has consequences for the level of service and the speed with which we can with respond to your requests or to the requests that the committees make from time to time. It varies a lot. We try to negotiate with the various departments.

Actually, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer is in the process of negotiating these things, it will be interesting to see if we find a way to establish agreements that are a little more solid, so that we can get information as we want it.

Ms. Denise Savoie: The agreements that he is in the process of developing are for the library, of course, and for research too.

Mr. Jacques Sabourin: Yes, but they are much more focused on the needs of the Parliamentary Budget Officer in this area. It is not completely open.

But you are giving us a good idea. We really should think about extending the strategy.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Agreed. I am pleased about that.

I have had the occasion myself to ask for information and they still do not have it. It has been quite a while. It seems to me that it would be quite simple.

Either there is no interest in providing us with the information, which would not be a good thing at all, or there is a problem that we need to fix.

Mr. Jacques Sabourin: When we ask for information, we really emphasize that parliamentarians need it. We often get the information in dribs and drabs. We just get part of it. It can take up to four or five months to get information from a department.

Ms. Denise Savoie: That is ridiculous.

Fine. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you very much, Madame Savoie.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): Mr. Dryden.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Young, before you accepted this position I'm sure you had in mind, from all your experience, what a parliamentary library should be like and should be able to offer. I'm sure, in the couple of years you've been in this position, you've had even more experiences that way.

When you take a look, how well do we do? In comparison to the notion of what you believe a parliamentary library should be, how do we stand up? Where don't we stand up the way we should? Do you have any international models in mind? Are there other countries that perform this function in the way you believe it should be performed here? What is it they do that makes them more exemplary?

Mr. William R. Young: I think perfection is never achievable, but one can always do better. So how do we stand up now? I think parliamentarians get excellent service from the library. When I bump into particularly the young people who come to work with us, I am constantly amazed at how smart and committed they are. I was able to bring into the library Kevin Page and Sonia L'Heureux, both of whom are acknowledged as leaders in their fields. Then Kevin was able to bring in Mostafa and Sahir. It's exponential.

So as Sharon Sutherland says, in many ways we are the gold standard, but I still think we can do better. Part of it is acknowledging that the library is essentially a research institution for Parliament and parliamentarians. If you look at it that way, you have a different take on how you might do things.

We've probably been too reactive in the past. There are ways we can respond more quickly. For example, we do legislative summaries for a lot of bills. These are wonderful documents but they take a long time to prepare. Maybe we need to look at getting something into your hands in the short term—maybe not as complete. The legislative summary would still be done, but we could give you something that might help you, when a bill is initially tabled in the House, to at least have a sense of some of the main pieces there.

We could have a forward-looking research agenda so that we anticipate issues. Other countries do that probably better than we do. I'm thinking right now of Sweden and Finland, where they do this kind of thing. They bring the best experts from the country together to discuss an issue and present Parliament with their views on it.

● (1255)

Senator Donald H. Oliver: That's what our committees do now.

Mr. William R. Young: But these people bring it in at the request of a committee, and they have a much more neutral discussion—let's put it that way—than you might find in a normal committee hearing.

A group of us is looking at how we can prepare for the future. We call it "Parliament 2020", and it involves Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the U.K. We're all confronting the same issues.

Basically it's the expansion of information. How do you get access to the information? How do you provide parliamentarians with what they need of that information? How do you as a research institution get access to the best thinking you can bring in, not necessarily just internally but from around the country and around the world? This is basically what we're looking at with this visiting scholar program.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Young and Mr. Dryden.

Mr. Asselin, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Young, I have some questions for you. In your document, you say that library services are provided in 10 different places on Parliament Hill or around the precinct. Did I understand that correctly?

Mr. William R. Young: Yes.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Renovations to the main library of Parliament have just been completed. How much did the renovations cost Public Works? Since they are now completed, you must know the cost.

Mr. William R. Young: Yes. Public Works paid. I do not know the exact amount, but it was almost \$136 million.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: One hundred and thirty six million dollars. The entire budget, including operating costs and salaries...

You say that, as the person responsible for the library, you have a certain budget at your disposal for 2008. Including your increase of \$1.1 million, how much is that?

• (1300)

Mr. William R. Young: It is \$39.7 million.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: The figure I have here is \$39.9 million. That includes all library services and the \$1.1 million increase over the previous year.

Ms. Lise Chartrand (Director, Finance and Material Management Division, Library of Parliament): It is an increase of 1.1% over the previous year, which is \$3 million.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: OK. In the documents that the library has provided, there is an increase of \$1.1 million. Is that increase enough for library operations? This is a question that was prepared by the library services. I am using the figures provided by the library, and they show an increase of \$1.1 million.

Ms. Lise Chartrand: Yes, it is in fact \$1.1 million. Of that amount, \$750,000 are allocated to non-discretionary expenses, including salary increases as a result of collective agreements, an increase in the cost of our collection, and the fees that we pay to the House of Commons under agreements for IT services.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Does it also include the amount of \$1.9 million for the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

Ms. Lise Chartrand: No. The \$3 million includes the \$1.9 million. The remaining \$1.1 million goes to the library.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Unless I am mistaken, the \$1.9 was included in the \$39 million that covers all operating costs.

Ms. Lise Chartrand: The amount that covers all operating costs includes the \$1.9 million.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Is the \$1.9 million for the Parliamentary Budget Officer included in the overall budget for the library? You said no when I asked you the question first.

Ms. Lise Chartrand: Yes, it is included in the \$39 million.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Fine.

Mr. Young, earlier, you mentioned re-staffing, new services, new hiring and new programs. For about a year and a half or two years, this envelope has been getting fatter very quickly. You are not one for half measures. You make your requests, and your budget increases considerably. Not only do you have \$1.1 million more in your budget, you hinted earlier that you are going to ask for more money, if I am not mistaken.

With the budget just passed in February, you know that, at the rate things are going, \$39 million will not be enough and that you are going to ask for a lot more in the course of the year.

Mr. William R. Young: We try to pay our expenses with the resources that we currently have available, but I cannot guarantee that we will have enough money to redesign our programs. There is an initial investment, after which costs go down. Without that investment, it is difficult to provide the services.

As I said earlier, the library's management services were not solid enough when I took office.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Solid or solid gold. Not a good choice of words? Not the term you had in mind?

Mr. Chair, the Parliamentary Librarian will have to establish priorities, but parliamentarians must do so too.

You are giving us very modern services. Personally, I represent a region where the unemployment rate is very high, as is the demand for social housing and requests for government assistance to industry.

Spending \$40 million per year, after doing \$136 million worth of renovations to the library, that presents me with some moral problems. My conscience has a hard time with it because of the poverty, the social housing and the improvements in employment insurance that are a long time coming.

We have a lot of problems, Mr. Young.

• (1305)

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): I appreciate what you're saying, but we've essentially run out of time. I've been given about five minutes, and we're already past six minutes, Mr. Asselin. You're certainly welcome to make your comments.

At this point in time, if it's okay with the rest of the committee, I would like to excuse our guests and go in camera to discuss how we're going to....

Oh, I'm sorry, I think my co-chair has a couple of questions she would like to ask Mr. Young.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): Thank you very much.

Just by way of preface, I want to say that I am really impressed with the steps that have been taken in the last year to strengthen and improve the library and to make it more modern in terms of management.

I have two questions, very briefly. I want to know how the 1.1% increase in discretionary items compares with other operations of other departments, and whether it is fair.

Secondly, with regard to the Copyright Act, what I have here says that the library intends to share the briefing note with the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament. I'm not sure I know what we can or should do for you, or whether we should not do anything at this point in time.

Those are my two questions.

Mr. William R. Young: I can't comment on the 1.1%. Other departments make their cases, and they get the amounts that they get. I can't really say whether it's lower, higher, or whatever. That increase was negotiated with and signed off by the speakers, so as far as I'm concerned, that is what I have lived with.

As far as copyright is concerned, I can't advise you what you should or ought to do. I think I suggested in my remarks that you might consider whether you want to report to the House, whether you want to suggest to the speakers that this is something they may wish to take an interest in, or whether it's just something that you would like to bring to the attention of the people within your caucuses. I think this is for the committee to decide and for the members to decide.

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Ms. Bennett, we have to be quick.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): I just think that this copyright thing is really the purpose of a committee such as this, that we should take a strong stand on this, and that we should report it to the House. Or we at least need a hearing, perhaps, to hear from people as to the effect of this.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Can I make a suggestion? We're going to move into future business, and maybe that would be an appropriate time to have this discussion.

•(1310)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Exactly.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Before we move in camera, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, we have a choice to make. The choice is whether or not we choose to report the estimates back to the respective houses, or we simply let them pass unamended, in which case they would be reported back. I've discussed this with my co-chair here and we think that, given the importance and relevance of the library for the work that we do as parliamentarians, we should take an active role in reporting these estimates back to both the House of Commons and the Senate.

So is that the general consensus of the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Therefore, I will call the questions I need to call in order to report this.

PARLIAMENT

Library of Parliament

Vote 15—Program expenditures.....\$34,971,000

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Shall the chair report vote 15 under Parliament, less the amount of \$32,056,750 granted in interim supply, to the House as carried?

(Vote 15 agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Very good.

At this point, I would just like to suspend the meeting for a few minutes as we move in camera.

Thank you very much to Mr. Young and everybody who came here today. Well done.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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