



CANADA

Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament

BILI • NUMBER 002 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 28, 2008

—
Co-Chairs

Mr. Blaine Calkins

The Honourable Marilyn Trenholme Counsell

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• (1240)

[English]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to call this meeting to order.

Before we proceed to hear from Mr. Young, which was the purpose of this meeting, I've had some discussions with my co-chair here and I thought I would like to bring to the committee's attention a couple of items that we might want to consider for future business. We can have a few thoughts about this throughout today and maybe deal with it quickly at the end and see where people's intentions are.

My understanding is that in the near future there will be a parliamentary budget officer appointed through an order in council, and I don't know if there are going to be some remarks on that today from Mr. Young. We may want to consider bringing in that parliamentary budget officer for some questions, if anybody thinks that's appropriate. I think we may actually have to deal with it at the committee level, at any rate.

Also, we should have all been notified that the tabling of the estimates for the library has been done as well, and they'll need to be dealt with before May 31.

So those are a couple of things we may want to consider in future business.

Do you have anything to add, Senator?

The Joint Co-Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell (New Brunswick, Lib.)): No, thank you very much.

[Translation]

Welcome everyone. We look forward to Mr. Young's presentation with great pleasure and interest.

[English]

It's a very special day to have you here. We've been looking forward to this, so that is really what this is all about.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Okay. Without further ado, I think the way we'll proceed is we'll give Mr. Young an opportunity to give his presentation. I'm assuming it's going to be around the 10-minute mark, and then we'll just take questions in no particular order from the floor. I would ask the members who have a question if they could indicate to one of the clerks right away. We'll just proceed in the order in which the indications have come from the floor.

With that, Mr. Young, the floor is yours.

Mr. William R. Young (Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament): Thank you.

Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, and members of the joint committee, good afternoon. Thank you very much for your invitation to appear before the committee today. I've been looking forward to meeting with you and providing you with an overview of the library's activities in the service of Parliament and parliamentarians. I'd also like to take the opportunity to validate the library's plans for the future and to discuss some of our current priority issues with you.

From my perspective, your insights are essential to help the library move forward in meeting the needs of Parliament effectively. In essence, I see an important role for the joint committee as a management board that provides advice and support in the development and implementation of the library's agenda to serve Parliament and parliamentarians now and more effectively in the future.

[Translation]

It is important to remember throughout any discussion of the Library's work that its mission is to create, manage and deliver authoritative, reliable and relevant information and knowledge for Parliament. Obviously, things do not stand still. The Library continues to evolve and adapt to change in order to remain Parliament's preferred and trusted source of accurate, non-partisan and independent information.

Some of this change is reflected in the way we have added services and organized ourselves. The traditional library functions—collecting, cataloguing, conserving—have been supplemented by research services and public programs—both of which have taken us far beyond our origins. Today, more than ever, the Library is a knowledge institution with a renewed vision of service for a 21st-century Parliament.

[English]

When we started down this path of institutional renewal two years ago, it was clear that turning everything upside down would be counterproductive. At the same time, the library had to look at how it could increase the value of its products and services and better support parliamentarians in their roles as legislators and representatives holding the executive to account.

There was and is a clear need to respond to our clients who have been asking for more analysis, synthesis, and interpretation from authoritative and reliable sources. In recent years there has also been a proliferation of organizations seeking to offer services similar to those the library already provides. And technology has been evolving—technology that needs to be captured and adapted to serve parliamentarians. Finally there was a need to build up the library's neglected administrative infrastructure in order to meet the highest standards of public sector governance.

Strengthened financial administration, human resources, information technology management, and planning were and are necessary to build the foundations for better service to clients. As I put it to library staff, in any house renovation you have to make sure that the plumbing, heating, and wiring are renewed before you start plastering and painting. So I started out with a focus on building up the library's leadership capacity, filling its critical policy gaps, rebooting its IT functions, and raising its transparency and accountability standards.

[Translation]

Two years later, we have a corporate services branch that can support Library managers as they develop and deliver services to parliamentarians. We have a clean, independent audit of our finances. We are implementing an integrated planning and reporting cycle and are establishing policies in important areas, such as employment equity and diversity, travel and hospitality. For the first time, we have a corporate human resources strategy to ensure this knowledge organization continues to develop its intellectual capital and attract the best and brightest minds available in the service of Parliament. We also now have an information technology strategy that will help us keep pace with developments in the digital world, and continue to offer products and services to our clients in the right format and at the right time.

• (1245)

[English]

Beyond all this internal rebuilding and restructuring, of course, are the strategic objectives we've set out to guide the library's development of 21st century services for a 21st century Parliament.

Last May I formalized and consolidated a road map for renewing our services, after consulting with staff and bringing in experts to examine specific areas. Its focus is on developing our capacity to create and to manage knowledge and to more systematically and strategically assess and meet our clients' needs.

I am proud of the unique services and programs we currently make available. I have brought copies of the latest edition of *RapidGuide*, our guide to library services. It's hot off the press. It will be in the binders you'll be receiving. You're the first parliamentarians to get it.

Most of you, of course, are already familiar with our research services and the committed analysts who serve committees of both houses. Many of you will also be aware of our on-demand services: personalized alerts that deliver the news, daily reports and studies on hot topics, seminars and training, and a range of publications and classroom resources for you to use in your constituencies.

As for the public outreach side, you've all seen, and hopefully met, the bright young people who guide visitors around the Parliament buildings. Perhaps you have talked with the teachers and have come to the dinner we have each year for the teachers who attend our Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy.

Today I'm also very pleased to introduce you to *InfoSeries*, a new library publication. You'll be receiving this in the binders you'll be getting.

Launched this week, this pilot on Afghanistan is a set of fourteen papers, written by various subject matter experts from within our research branch, that provide background and analysis on Afghan issues, Canada's involvement in the country, and the broader international context. This initiative embodies one of the library's important strategic objectives—to develop a proactive research capacity and to provide parliamentarians with the knowledge and information they need to deal with emergent issues on the parliamentary agenda.

To the same end, we are also looking at ways to leverage partnerships with top academics and leading policy thinkers so that parliamentarians will have ready access to the best network of Canadian and international resources available.

We know that legislative libraries everywhere are struggling to innovate and improve services to parliamentary clients, so we're working hard to develop networks with our colleagues from around the world. This summer, from August 6 to 8, I will be hosting a conference called “Legislative Libraries: Partners in Democracy”. Parliamentary librarians from over 30 countries and parliamentary clients will be brought together to examine issues of mutual concern. As members of the joint committee, you will be invited to participate in several key sessions. I hope you'll be able to join us.

In addition, I am collaborating with the U.K.'s House of Commons library and several other partners on a project we are calling “Parliament 2020”. It seeks to answer the questions of how do you see the parliament of the future working, and how will information and communication technologies support this?

• (1250)

[Translation]

As we build the Library's knowledge management capacity and develop new services for parliamentarians, I see a very important role for this committee. As our window on Parliament, you are uniquely positioned to help us determine what you and your colleagues need most, now and for the future. We are committed to consulting clients as we develop our products and services. We will be looking for your input, and I invite you to become involved.

[English]

Increasingly, the library is reviewing its traditional role as a collector and custodian of documentation in the context of the digital universe. There are many questions here that need to be addressed, and some of them fall within your mandate as legislators.

For example, how can parliamentarians be assured of access to the information they need to do their jobs when copyright legislation is being reviewed or amended? Again, this is a place where the joint committee can and I believe should play a role. In too many instances, Parliament has acted without considering the consequences to itself.

And now I'd like to talk briefly about the library's highest-profile challenge and the newest service to Parliament: putting in place the parliamentary budget officer or PBO function.

I began working on this when the government's intention to move forward became clear. Again, I was guided by the fact that Parliament requires focused assistance in research and analysis, and since the library already performs many of the duties related to economic analysis, increasing the critical mass and integrating the PBO into the library was the easiest and most efficient way to provide better service to Parliament.

[Translation]

Above all, our efforts have been guided by the legislation and our mandate to establish an office that is independent and non-partisan and that will provide services to both Houses and all parties. Locating the officer within the Library of Parliament means that parliamentarians can rest assured that he or she will function as their servant, operating within the library's mandated approach and professional ethos in its service to Parliament.

[English]

While some of the functions associated with the officer will enhance the library's ability to do what it already does, there is an important new element, one that provides Parliament with a new dimension and value added in exercising fully its role in oversight of the government's fiscal plan. As you know, this means explaining the assumptions underlying that plan and assisting parliamentarians in asking relevant questions relating to the executive's economic and fiscal forecasts.

When I appeared before the House of Commons finance committee two weeks ago, some members expressed their concern that we did not foresee the PBO producing an alternative fiscal forecast. What we are suggesting is that the PBO should add value to the forecast presented by the executive by explaining to parliamentarians what underlying factors affect possible alternative assumptions for economic outcomes and consequently for different fiscal outcomes.

Obviously there are many things still to be worked out in terms of how the PBO will function. Many of these necessarily will have to wait until the officer is in place.

I believe that you, as the oversight committee for the library—essentially its management board—can play an important role in making the PBO an effective instrument for Parliament to use in holding the executive to account. Do you want the PBO to be one

competing voice amongst many that produce fiscal forecasts, or do you want it to take on the unique job of assisting you to exercise your challenge, oversight, and scrutiny functions, which Parliament itself possesses?

• (1255)

[Translation]

For example, the work of the PBO, like the activities of the rest of the Library, is driven by demand. If the future demand outstrips the ability of the PBO and Library to provide appropriate services, I foresee a need, through this committee, to engage Parliament either to secure additional resources or to establish guidelines that would help set priorities for the PBO's activities.

[English]

Parenthetically, I should mention that the demand-driven requirements of the PBO are not separate from the library's own activities to update and establish overall level of service guidelines to assist the whole organization in serving parliamentarians in committees. I believe these guidelines would benefit from your input and could well be brought to you for discussion before they are implemented.

According to the legislation, the selection of the PBO is a decision of the government. As soon as the officer is appointed, I think it would be appropriate for the candidate to meet with you first.

I joined the library over 20 years ago because I believed in its unique mission. I'm proud that the library is on track with its leadership team, its business approach, and most importantly its attitude. Supported by this committee, I think we can seize an important opportunity to ensure that the library continues to serve Parliament and parliamentarians effectively well into the 21st century. Cooperation, partnership, and excellence are the hallmarks that will characterize our ultimate success.

[Translation]

I cannot end my remarks without paying tribute to my colleagues and staff. Everyone, starting with senators and members of the House of Commons, talks positively about the people who work at the Library.

[English]

It is a privilege for me to spend my days working with such dedicated professional and non-partisan people who are really smart. They sure keep me on my toes.

I'd like to introduce the members of the executive team who have put so much of themselves into making the library one of the best of its kind in the world.

First of all, there is Lynn Brodie, who is the director of the information and document resource service. She also looks after accommodations and is the library's representative on "Planning for the Hill", the long-term vision and plan for the Hill.

Dianne Brydon is the director of parliamentary public programs. Dianne is also doing a lot of work associated with an evaluation of our publications program and putting in place appropriate client relations. Her title really doesn't reflect exactly the full range of her duties, and I think I'm going to have to change it to make an honest woman of her.

Jacques Sabourin is the acting director general of the parliamentary information research service. Jacques has come out of retirement twice to assist me in my work, and I'm very pleased to be able to rely on such experience across the whole Hill.

Sue Stimpson is the director general of corporate services. Sue is one of my new recruits who has come to the library after a career in both the Department of Finance and then the Transportation Agency of Canada.

And finally, there is Allan Darling, who's the senior special advisor for the parliamentary budget officer. Again, I've enticed Allan back into the workforce. He was a deputy secretary to cabinet and deputy secretary of Treasury Board and most recently a consultant to the World Bank. He came to the library to help me think through and put in place an appropriate structure for the parliamentary budget officer.

Lastly, the staff have a briefing book that will help you delve a little deeper into questions and issues that are of particular interest to you. That should be distributed now.

And finally, thank you again for your invitation to appear today.

• (1300)

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

Committee members should know that we can sit until about twenty-five after one because members of the Senate need to go and get to their duties in the Senate chamber.

I do have a speaking list here. First on the list is Senator Lapointe.

[*Translation*]

Senator Jean Lapointe (Quebec, Lib.):

Thank you for that exceptional presentation, sir. I am very pleased. The Library provides excellent service to parliamentarians. Is it also open to the public?

Mr. William R. Young: No, the Library is not open to the public, but people can ask for special permission to study in the Library or if, for example, they need to use our collection of parliamentary documents and publications.

Senator Jean Lapointe:

I have made use of the Library's services with Pascal Charron and my assistant. We received very, very good service and outstanding information. The research was absolutely in a class of its own. The point I would like to raise today has nothing to do with the Library as such, but with this committee.

Two or three years ago, when Dr. Morin was our chair, I proposed that the chairs and co-chairs be paid the same amount as the chairs of other committees, even if that meant splitting \$10,000. That would perhaps encourage people to have meetings more frequently. There

is a great amount of inertia in this committee and I stand by my proposal. This is not the first time that I have mentioned it, and I think the time has come for action.

If we do not get action from the Library, trust me, I am going try to get action myself.

Mr. William R. Young: That is a matter that I can do nothing about. Unfortunately, that decision lies with the two chambers.

Senator Jean Lapointe: That is all I had to say, sir. I said it, I stand by it, and I will say it again.

Thank you, sir.

[*English*]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Lapointe.

Senator Counsell.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Co-Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell):

It is clear to me that Senator Lapointe is the one among us who is most interested in the Library of Parliament. I recognize him not because of the remuneration, because I will be leaving this year, but for his passionate dedication to the Library.

Thank you.

Senator Jean Lapointe: Mr. Co-chair and Madam Co-Chair, I must point out that I am not interested in the position.

[*English*]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): I certainly am not in a position to speak to that. I think it's a little bit of a conflict for me. So I'll just pass the floor over to Ms. Bennett.

• (1305)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Thank you very much. That's very helpful. Congratulations on all the work you've done.

Unlike the reputation of this committee...I think it's the most important committee in Parliament. I think it will be important that we meet more often and that we do as you have asked, to be sort of an advisory board on how we move forward. This is about the tools that parliamentarians have to do their job. I think we've quite often felt that government has huge resources. Parliament has very little resources, and yet our job is to have the newest and better information to be able to hold government to account.

I was part of the wonderful e-consultation that the library helped us with on the future of CPP disability. There have been so many things.

In the last Parliament, or maybe the Parliament before that, this committee was looking at some of the things around recruitment retention and getting the very best people to come and work in the library, perhaps on sabbaticals, and how researchers keep up their continuing education, whether there's money for them to go to conferences, and the kinds of ways they need to be in their milieu in order to advise Parliament best. So I guess I would ask you—particularly with your conference coming up on the use of technology and e-technology and the good use we put the technology to during the disability consultation—whether you have enough resources to do what you would like to do. Is there anything the committee can do to help ensure that you have the money you need to do what you want to do?

Mr. William R. Young: Well, we've been going through a whole re-evaluation of our planning and are putting in place a planning exercise, which is starting to bear some results. One of the things we've done in the road map is to identify some key results areas, KRAs, for issues on knowledge development—which is some of what you're talking about—knowledge management, and client relations.

So we're in the position right now of developing business plans for a lot of these things. Actually, yesterday, I was talking to some representatives from Queen's University, and they were asking me the same question, because they're going to be putting out some report on information in Parliament.

My major concern has always been, what shall I say, maintaining the intellectual capital and leadership of the library, and I think that's partly some of what you're addressing there. I think there are some different ways I would like to proceed in the future, but again, we're planning these. I hate to say that I need more money right now without having a specific purpose and reason for spending that money.

One of the things we've been looking at, for example, is putting in place research chairs in other areas, modelled, to some extent, on the same concept as the parliamentary budget officer. They would provide parliamentarians with high-level advice and support in specific areas. You might find someone, for example, dealing with the Constitution in Parliament. You might find someone dealing with science and technology. And when these plans are in place—this is part of the consultation piece with you folks—when we have some proposals, we'll come to you and talk to you and talk about the need for resources. But for me to say right now....

You can always use additional resources. But honestly, I'd hate to give you any kind of dollar figure or a sense of the magnitude until we have the business plans in place and the actual proposals developed.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

I have an extensive list here, and we're running short.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Well, maybe he can answer this during somebody else's question, maybe later on a question on the parliamentary budget officer.

I think one of the areas where parliamentarians feel the most inadequate is estimates. Somehow, following the estimates commit-

tee to committee, the researchers have been stretched. Do you see that there could be an annualized approach to estimates, committee by committee, that would have the resources such that...?

I remember when you were my researcher, on the disability committee, occasionally you would be able to whisper in my ear, when the bureaucrats came before us, "That's what they said last year".

Sometimes, unless you have that kind of institutional knowledge from performance reports to estimates to performance.... Do you see that there would be somebody tracking that for every committee and every department?

● (1310)

Mr. William R. Young: Well, from my perspective, one of the tasks of the parliamentary budget officer is going to be integrating that work with the work the analysts already do on estimates for committees.

I've asked Allan Darling to come up here, because he's been looking at this whole issue of integrating the budget officer into the work we already do, specifically relating to things like the estimates.

Allan, do you have any comments?

Mr. Allan Darling (Senior Special Advisor, Parliamentary Budget Officer Project, Library of Parliament): I have just a very brief comment. In our planning for the staffing for the parliamentary budget officer, we're looking at two senior executives, one to lead on the fiscal economic forecast side and the other to lead on the expenditure, analysis, and management side of government. So we will be building into that office a much more senior-level capacity to provide some leadership that will then be spread out across all the staff who are supporting estimates reviews by committees.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you very much.

We'll have Mr. Goldring, please.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Young, and kudos to you and your staff. Over the 11 years that I've been here on Parliament Hill, my office has certainly taken advantage of the services from your library over the years: tremendous service, tremendous response—and quick and efficient. So congratulations.

You include an issue here on an info series. This gives far more detail and is certainly timely, but my question is, if we as parliamentarians have specific issues—I'll just mention one interest I have, the new geopolitical realities of the Caribbean rim of countries—would we be able to put it on a list or whatever to develop a similar type of paper for that region? Given that the government has expressed interest in doing more in the region, and it would be economically advantageous to our Atlantic port trades, and we have the new realities of... Do we call it "post-Castro" now? I think he's still quite in charge—Raoul is very much in charge—but there will be a future; political reality is changing. As well, there is Venezuela, and other issues. I think it would be important to take an in-depth look like this at that entire region.

Would that be possible?

Mr. William R. Young: The short answer is yes. This is a pilot. We've not put together something like this before. The aim is to be as timely as we can be and as anticipatory as we can be. So it is, in effect, a question of identifying these precise types of emerging issues that you're mentioning, and that is one that would be on the list.

Mr. Peter Goldring: So I can put in my request?

Mr. William R. Young: You certainly could.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Now it's Senator Oliver.

Senator Donald Oliver (Nova Scotia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Young. There are several things I would like to raise, but in view of the time and the fact that others want to speak, I'll limit it to one thing, and that's the parliamentary budget officer.

I think this is the most important innovation, in terms of parliamentary empowerment, that has taken place in the last few decades. It seems to me that this committee is especially poised to be the committee that helps set the framework for what this new person does and what this new body does.

I hope we take up the invitation we heard three times in the address, that this committee meet at an early date with this new officer. I hope the steering committee, once the appointment is made, will choose an early time for a meeting, and I hope it can be even for more than an hour, so that we can spend some very important time with this new officer discussing the types of things we would like to see and the role we would like to see this new parliamentary budget officer play.

It's really going to revolutionize the things that finance committees of the House and the Senate can do in being better able to perform their jobs. I hope we don't let this invitation go by.

I had some questions on IT and costs, but I will pass, as long as I've made my point about the parliamentary budget officer.

Thank you.

•(1315)

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

Would it be okay if I just ask a general question? I have had a chance to discuss this with my counterpart. If she and I were to try to find a time in the very near future, would we have the consent of the committee to try to find a time to have those discussions after this appointment has been made? Is that okay?

I think we have our—

The Joint Co-Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell): I'd like to add, if I may, Chair, that we may have to have two one-hour sessions. It's very difficult to get even one hour, because of all of our involvements and the pressure of our agendas.

I know you said two hours, Senator Oliver, but it might well be two one-hour sessions.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you very much.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Young and your associates, for coming here today.

Off the top, I'll be a little bit tongue-in-cheek here and say that you answered a question from a member of the Senate that the library is not open to members of the public.

If you give notes, parliamentarians read them. According to your notes, you receive 46,000 inquiries from the public each year. You conducted 12,000 tours, and 372,000 visitors participated in these tours. So obviously the Library of Parliament, through its public information office, is indeed open to the public.

Mr. William R. Young: Well, exactly. I was thinking of the building and people doing research, which is, I guess, reflecting where I come from in terms of my own background. But we're very proud of those questions.

The central inquiry service is actually growing in demand. It's one of the areas we're looking at putting more resources into just because of that level of demand. You've seen the visitors every day as you walk the halls. The number of visitors—perhaps Dianne has additional information—has actually been going down because of the security requirements that visitors to the buildings have to go through. We're down 20%, she's telling me right now.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: That kind of segues into another question, but I do say with all sincerity, my tongue was planted firmly in my cheek when I made that statement, because I think we understood the context in which you were answering the question.

But it is relevant to me and to the committee members that the environment of the library is changing. We've had changes in representation orders. We'll be adding new members to the House of Commons over the coming years. That will obviously substantially increase the demands on the library, particularly for research work and for information holdings and other things. There are various things going on right now.

You can't ask for this, because you have a budgetary process, and you respect the process. But for us, as parliamentarians from both houses, could I request, through you, Co-Chairs, that our analysts do a profile of past budget practices, comparing and contrasting growth in budgets, and growth in resources for the House, for the Senate, and for the library. And could they also prepare a piece on impacting issues such as the new representation order and issues—as previously mentioned—requiring analysis, such as the Cuban situation, and to go back a number of years?

There's an assumption to my hypothesis, which is that growth in the resources of the library has not actually been parallel to growth in resources to the Senate or to the House. In fact, it's been a reduced percentage. In fact, the demands placed on the library are quite significant.

So, Co-Chairs, if that were possible—I don't know if it requires a formal motion—I think for us, as members of this committee, in addition to receiving further information about the activities of the various branches of the library, we should really do an in-depth study of the three branches of Parliament in which I would include the House, the Senate, and the library, and a comparison of resourcing.

• (1320)

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you, Mr. Byrne. That's a very good point.

You're free, as a member of Parliament, of course, to ask for this information any time you like, but if you would like this to be presented back to the committee, I would certainly appreciate entertaining a motion.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I so move.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Okay. Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Thank you.

Moving right along, go ahead, please, Senator Rompkey.

Senator William Rompkey (Newfoundland and Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to briefly take the opportunity to thank the Library of Parliament for their work. I've been around here for a while, and I've had unfailingly good service from them. They're a resource we value highly and can't do without.

My question really was like Mr. Goldring's, and that is with regard to the overview. I was glad to hear your answer to his question, because I wanted to suggest that the Arctic might be an area for study. There are at least two Senate committees that are studying the Arctic from various points of view at the moment. It was mentioned in the throne speech. It was mentioned in the budget as clearly an area that Canada has an immediate interest in and an important interest in. I just wanted to put that forward as a subject for one of the overviews.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Mr. Plamondon, you have the floor.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick question. Of the 308 members of Parliament, about how many have requested research from the Library?

Mr. William R. Young: I do not have those figures. This is a problem that I am presently working on. We do not have exact figures because of the two computer systems that we use for our replies. There are two systems, RESDOC and PARLREF.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: I have been here for 24 years. I have used your services too and I am also very satisfied. I share the opinion and the sentiments of the senators who commented on that.

Because of the technological changes brought about by the Internet, and the type of work and the training that our assistants or our new assistants on the hill receive, it means that those young people have grown up being used to doing a lot of their own research on the Internet. So a lot of the requests for information that once were made to Library staff are no longer made. When we ask our assistant if he can find information on a given subject, he finds it on the Internet. He rarely tells me that he went to the Library.

Given that observation, I wonder if there has been a change in approach to the services that the Library could provide in order to complement that research. I will give you an example. Suppose I have a speech, a lecture, to give in a school. I ask my assistants to find information. They will look on the Internet and they will find everything I need. On the other hand, I am sure that, if I go to the Library, meet a researcher and have the time to explain my request, he will find me something complementary because of his experience and his specialty. I do not sense among members' staff the need to go the Library because they are getting better and better at using the Internet.

Mr. William R. Young: The skills of the analysts, the librarians and the people who work for members and senators are coming closer together. Clearly, that has an effect on our services. The number of simple reference questions that the Library receives from members is going down, but the number of complex questions is going up.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: That is what I thought. I understand. I noticed it one day when I asked this question...

• (1325)

[*English*]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): We only have a minute left. Is it a short question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Yes.

When we were apologizing to the Aboriginal people who went to residential schools and are still alive, I asked the Library of Parliament staff a question that was intriguing me, namely how many residential schools we had in Canada, and how many in each province. It was a specific question. I received a document of fifteen pages or so that was quite complex.

I wondered if the Library might not have asked me, as it set about doing my research, if I needed a thorough search for specific details. I wanted to know how many residential schools there had been in Quebec and how many natives went to them. I wanted to know the number so that I could understand how the \$80 million was being divided up. I expect more specifics from the Library. I also expect it to go back to like it was before to some extent. You say that the questions used to be simpler. Now your research is more complex, but there are fewer direct services for members.

[English]

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Mr. Young, do you have a comment on that, or are you just going to take it under advisement?

Mr. William R. Young: I'll just take that under advisement.

[Translation]

I try to give members answers with

[English]

a little bit of explanation attached so that when you ask for a reference question you know exactly what you're getting with the link and an explanation of how that would fit with the actual question. The other thing is to ensure that the analyst or the person who receives the request asks so that you get the exact information you're looking for.

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

Very quickly, Mr. Cannan, if you have a question.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to echo Senator Oliver's comments. I think the parliamentary budget officer is an excellent initiative for accountability for all Canadians, so I'm looking forward to that position being filled as soon as possible.

I think Mr. Young was one of the first people I met when I came here, and I really appreciate the work you and your staff are doing. Approximately how many staff do you have?

Mr. William R. Young: I think we have 355 full-time equivalents, FTEs as they say, but if you add in the part-timers and the students we have, it's slightly over 400.

Mr. Ron Cannan: How many analysts?

Mr. William R. Young: In PIRS, the parliamentary information and research service, there are 164...I think there are about 102 analysts, or slightly fewer—

Mr. Ron Cannan: I'm just trying to get down to the specific question, the turnaround time. How do you prioritize? Sometimes if

you put a request in it can take longer than others, and sometimes I'm sure the requests you receive make your staff shake their heads. How do you prioritize as far as a committee request or an independent senator or member's request, and do you have a benchmark for turnaround time?

Mr. William R. Young: That's one of the reasons we're putting in place new level-of-service guidelines that go across the whole library, because the staff, I have to say in all honesty, sometimes find it very difficult to set the priorities. I think many of them feel they are torn between three or four different things, and they have no set of concrete guidelines.

To tell you the truth, it's one of the things I would very much like this committee to become involved with in terms of putting in place guidelines that will allow us to provide the best possible service, but also to allow the staff to have what we call a quality of life, because some people are here during very busy times of the year, and Kirsten up at the front can tell you that. They don't get out of here before 9 or 10 at night, and it can go for fairly long stretches from time to time.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Work-life balance is important for all of us.

I'm just filling in for today, but I look forward to this committee...

The Joint Co-Chair (Mr. Blaine Calkins): We do have to get going.

I'd like to thank you, Mr. Young, and everybody for their questions and your comments. I know they were certainly appreciated.

I'll take a closing comment from my colleague.

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

I just want to say that I was speaking with the clerk, and we had promised you some sandwiches or something today, but we found out there was no money. If we could perhaps have a motion from a member of the committee from the Senate—I can only speak to that group of members—that we officially look into the very small amount of money so that those of you, like myself, who haven't had any lunch...I'm fine, but still.... It's so we might see if there is a possibility of obtaining a small amount of money.

So moved by Senator Rompkey.

Thank you very much. There will be no objections.

• (1330)

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

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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