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Thursday, May 7, 2009

—
Co-Chairs

Mr. Peter Goldring

The Honourable Sharon Carstairs

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• (1205)

[English]

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC)): Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the sixth meeting of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament. We're continuing our hearings in regard to the main estimates and the library budget. I wish to remind everybody that the focus of this meeting will be the discussion of the main estimates and the library budget.

Appearing here today from the Library of Parliament we have William Young. Welcome, Mr. Young. We have Sue Stimpson, director general of corporate services. Welcome. And we have Lise Chartrand, director of finance and materiel management.

Good afternoon and welcome to the committee meeting. I just want to add my own comments that certainly in the 12 years that I've been here, I've always had great admiration for the excellent work of the library and the people who serve and work with the library. I want to thank each and every one of you very much for all of the efforts through all of the years.

Mr. Young, if you would like to take the floor, we'll listen to what you have to say.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. William R. Young (Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament): Thank you Mr. Co-Chair, Honourable Senators and Members.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you about the estimates in the context of the Library of Parliament.

What I particularly like about my work is being able to work every day with highly qualified and professional people. Some of them are here today, and with your permission, I would like to introduce them to you. Next to me, as the Chairman said, is Ms. Sue Stimpson, Director General of Corporate Services, and Ms. Lise Chartrand, Director of Finance. Also here are Sonia L'Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Cynthia Hubbertz, Director of the Information and Document Resource Service, Diane Brydon, Director General of Learning and Access Services, and Ms. Lynn Brodie, who handles our accommodation requirements

All these people, as well as Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, make up senior management at the Library. It is thanks to this team that I can get the work entrusted to me done.

[English]

As members will recall, I appeared before you just a few weeks ago and laid out in some detail the operations of the library—the work we do, the products we provide, and the plans we have for the future.

In particular, I reviewed the strategic priorities we had established three years ago as part of the overall renewal of the Library of Parliament. Those priorities were modernizing our knowledge management capacity, strengthening our management support capacity, and getting the new Parliamentary Budget Officer function up and running.

I reported to members on how the library has responded to changing economic realities by seeking greater efficiencies, realigning our organization, and focusing on our core services. Part of that restructuring dealt with our research services, including the creation of a new unit to provide forward-looking monitoring of events and issues. I outlined our efforts to reboot our IT capacity, which is central to our vision for a virtual library; our digitization strategy; and additional electronic services to members.

As well, I reported on some of the changes we've made based on the perception audit conducted last year, including the expansion of learning opportunities to members through podcasts and seminars.

In many respects, while this has been a challenging year from both a budgetary and a management perspective, it has been a year of opportunity. We have, for example, increased our ability to manage and share information, enhanced the corporate infrastructure, and offered members the services of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Animating all our efforts and initiatives is a single-minded determination to better support you in your work and to provide you with the independent and reliable advice that is central to your role as legislators and representatives. That is the pith and purpose of the library, the central goal to which all of our activities are directed.

Today I thought I would expand a bit on a couple of the issues that arose during my last appearance before you. The first is the budgetary process that we went through last fall to prepare for this new fiscal year.

Last year, as we always do, we based our budget submission on an analysis of the risks we face in delivering on our mandate to support Parliament. Obviously we have to take into account the current operating environment as well as our achievements. A good example of an achievement would be the strengthened management capacity we have created over the past two years. We also try to demonstrate the services that Parliament can expect to see in the year ahead, based, of course, on the level of investment in the library.

As always, we confront some tough realities. One reality is that we are a comparatively small organization with a very large job to do. We serve over 400 parliamentarians in the Senate and the House of Commons, as well as their staff, and we do this in a world of explosively expanding information.

Our budgets typically increase by percentages in line with other organizations on the Hill, but because they increase from a small base, the actual dollar increases continue to constrain our ability to fully respond to parliamentarians' needs. The original internal draft of our budget proposal for 2009-10 reflected the vision and plan for library renewal that was presented to, and endorsed by, this committee last year. It was a concrete proposal to deliver on the next stage of renewal, which embodied all the planning that had gone into making this a reality, but between the preparation of this internal draft in September and the approval of a greatly scaled-down final version in mid-December, the world found itself in an economic upheaval.

During these months between September and December, the library's senior staff worked with me to demonstrate that we were not naive about recognizing the impact of the economic environment, so we prepared a budget submission that would allow us to move forward in a couple of key areas while maintaining core products and services.

● (1210)

We knew that modernizing the library's research services and its IM/IT infrastructure would be essential to meeting the information management needs of a 21st century Parliament and providing appropriate support to senators and members of Parliament. And we believed that moving forward in these two areas would provide the springboard that would help us develop our other services more quickly in the future. So we looked long and hard across the whole organization to identify our core services. We determined where we could reallocate from low- to high-priority areas in support of you and your work. It was a bit of a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul, and it was far from easy for any of us.

I would like to pay tribute to my management team—at all levels—for the way they were able to buckle down, to see beyond their pet projects or enthusiasms and be guided by a broader view than their own bailiwick. They have all taken and supported actions based on what would be best for Parliament. For some of them, it has meant giving up or postponing activities very dear to their hearts.

Let me turn now to another issue that arose during my March 12 appearance, and that is the amount allocated to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Let me be clear that there was no cut to this budget for this fiscal year 2009-10. None. In fact, the PBO received a small increase consistent with the rest of the library's budget. By the same

token, the PBO was asked to live within its means, like every other service head in the library.

As I said a moment ago, in these challenging economic times, we have all had to trim our sails. We have all had to make some sacrifices. For example, the overall reference levels submitted for the entire library prior to the economic crisis taking hold were much higher than the budget estimates with which we are working today. I think confusion arose from the fact that, when the PBO position was established, a proposed amount was earmarked for the library's future reference level for planning purposes. Over time, what had only been hypothetically set aside was portrayed as cast in stone.

As members know, it is normal practice with new legislation or policy initiatives to establish a notional amount that allows budgetary and operational planning. Once the operations are actually in place, however, a business analysis is prepared to see if it supports the notional amount proposed. Until this is done, the notional funds are not available to the organization for spending. This is exactly what happened in the case of the PBO. A notional amount of \$2.7 million was identified but never officially requested or authorized. Indeed, this amount does not appear anywhere in the library's budget.

So what has happened since? Once the PBO was created, the library proposed a structure, staffing levels, and operational plan based on two key provisions of the Federal Accountability Act. The first was that approximately three-quarters of PBO's main functions would be demand-driven on the basis of requests from parliamentarians and committees. The second was that the PBO would be integrated within the Library of Parliament.

When the time came to actually fund the PBO, the library could not predict what the demand would be for his services. However, we estimated that two-thirds of the notional allotment would be a reasonable amount with which to establish the position. At the same time, we knew, given the enthusiastic support for the function from parliamentarians, that additional resources might be required in the future.

● (1215)

Unfortunately, the library cannot complete a fully costed business analysis. This is because the PBO has chosen to operate under a model that is not consistent with the legislation that created his position.

Indeed, the PBO's current path proposes staffing and resources at levels above the library's estimates for the function. Moreover, the intention to operate outside the library will have a significant impact on the costs of this function, as the efficiencies originally anticipated will not materialize.

To sum up, the library simply cannot determine whether the budget pressures asserted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer are due to demand for his services or whether they arise from his decision to operate outside the framework established by law.

The final item I would like to discuss is the rather unique process that exists for the formulation and approval of the budget for the Library of Parliament. As members know, the House of Commons budget is reviewed and approved by the Board of Internal Economy, and the Senate budget by the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration. These committees both play the critical role of approving the annual budget estimates, examining expenditures, approving salary scales for non-unionized employees, and authorizing the negotiation of collective agreements.

In the case of the Library of Parliament, however, there is no comparable management body. Our budget goes directly to the Speakers of the Senate and the House for their consideration.

Now, I hasten to say that the library has always been a good steward of public funds. It has always held itself to the highest standards of accountability. Successive years of unqualified independent audits of our books—I think we tabled them at the last meeting—testify to that.

Still, the absence of a board of internal review raises legitimate questions and concerns. It means that this committee, with its unique insights and expertise on the Library of Parliament, only becomes involved after the estimates have been tabled in the House of Commons. The result? This committee can only reduce or reject those estimates during the supply process.

With respect, Mr. Co-Chair, I believe this does the Speakers and Parliament a disservice, and I see a much more active role for this committee. That is why, last year, I proposed to the Speakers that they ask you to review the main estimates, and any supplementary estimates of the Library of Parliament, through a subcommittee, perhaps a steering committee, in advance of tabling.

This subcommittee would have representatives from both the Senate and the House of Commons, as well as from each of the recognized parties in both chambers. Its members would develop expertise and familiarity with the library's financial affairs, enabling it to play a critical role in reviewing not only the estimates but also our plans, priorities, and performance.

I believe this enhanced role is consistent with the spirit of subsection 74(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, which anticipates the joint committee assisting the Speakers of both chambers in the making of orders and regulations “and for the proper expenditure of moneys voted by Parliament”.

The involvement of this committee at an earlier stage in the appropriations process would produce at least three clear benefits. First, it would provide valuable assistance to the Speakers in carrying out their functions under the Parliament of Canada Act. Second, it would allow parliamentarians to have more input into the library's budget and investment priorities. Third, it would subject the Library of Parliament to the same kind of review as the Senate and the House of Commons.

As members know, while there has always been provision for a joint committee on the library, its role has never been consistently developed. Indeed, your status is unique. It does not oversee a government department or its activities, nor is it, strictly speaking, a management committee. It is, instead, an advisory committee whose job is to assist the two Speakers with respect to the direction and control of the Library of Parliament.

• (1220)

I believe my proposal would clearly enhance your activities and make this a more effective management committee, one whose expertise could be employed in reviewing and advising on the library's priorities, plans, and funding proposals as they are being developed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Co-Chair, I am sure that the committee members have many questions for us. Allow me to conclude the way I started, which is to remind them that the Library exists to support Parliament by providing it with information. That is why we work tirelessly day after day. I have the good fortune to direct a team of 400 highly qualified analysts, librarians and information specialists, and it is an honour to work with them.

I am also delighted about the idea of being able to continue to work with your committee. Your advice will help to ensure that the Library will continue to be able to serve all parliamentarians, now and in the future.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

We'll now open it up to the round of questioning.

Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses. It is nice to see you again, Mr. Young.

I'm going to take these five minutes to focus on the process for the estimates. I just want to review very briefly a statement we heard from Mr. Wild of the Treasury Board Secretariat, which is relevant to today's presentation:

The Library of Parliament reports through the Parliamentary Librarian to the Speakers of the House and Senate, and its direction and management are completely independent from the executive, meaning the government.

This means that the Treasury Board Secretariat and other central agencies play no role in determining how the library and its offices, including the PBO, operate or perform their mandates. The estimates for the library are prepared by the Parliamentary Librarian and approved by the Speakers of the House and Senate. They are then transmitted to the President of the Treasury Board, who tables them in Parliament, and nothing more.

Is this accurate to your understanding?

Mr. William R. Young: Absolutely.

• (1225)

Mr. Greg Rickford: Okay, thank you.

So you have an absolute independent authority to set the budgets of the divisions of the Library of Parliament?

Mr. William R. Young: I would call it an absolute authority. What I do is an internal process, as I think I explained the last time. We have a management retreat in February where we look at what we've accomplished and set our priorities for the next year. The management team takes the summer to prepare business cases and the senior executive committee gets together.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Sure. That's fair.

Mr. William R. Young: We go through the internal process. Then I take a proposal to the Speakers, who scrutinize it, and they will make suggestions, and have made suggestions.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I could have been more specific.

Mr. William R. Young: It's modified, but once I sign off on it and then the Speakers sign off on it, it is transmitted to Treasury Board, and that's it.

Mr. Greg Rickford: So to be more clear, "absolute" means to the exclusion of the government.

Mr. William R. Young: Absolutely. You're quite correct.

Mr. Greg Rickford: And is it true that an essential element of that independent authority is that you would not at any time accept interference from any minister regarding these internal obligations?

Mr. William R. Young: In the three years I've been in this job, I have never spoken to a minister or member of the government about this budget.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Thank you.

Mr. Young, have you ever been contacted directly or indirectly by any minister of the crown, including the Prime Minister, with instructions to increase or decrease the divisions of the library—any of them?

Mr. William R. Young: No.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Is it also true that there has been no political pressure regarding the budget of the Parliamentary Budget Officer specifically? You said no, but just to be clear, has there been no political interference, to your knowledge, with the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

Mr. William R. Young: You're talking about from the government?

Absolutely not.

No, there has been no reduction. In fact, the budget has been slightly increased by the same percentage as the rest of the library's budget was increased, in terms of the non-discretionary component.

Mr. William R. Young:

Mr. William R. Young:

Mr. Greg Rickford: Given what we've heard today, and understanding the process from the meetings we've had as a committee leading up to this, and in full view of what you've told us regarding the sole discretion of the library's budget or its divisions' budgets, any story suggesting that there has been government interference with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or any of your budgets, for that matter, would be false and misleading.

Mr. William R. Young: It would be false and misleading.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I don't have any further questions.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Malhi.

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

I have questions for Mr. Young.

The Library of Parliament's planned spending would increase by \$615,000 in 2009 and 2010. Could you explain how this increase is satisfactory to maintain the current level of services? And what is the breakdown of this amount between the different service areas?

Mr. William R. Young: Of the \$615,000, almost \$300,000 is for non-discretionary items, including certain salary increases as a result of collective agreements; things like legal fees; and items over which I, essentially, have very little or no control at all.

So the discretionary amount has been \$235,000, I believe. Of that, \$38,000 is for employee benefit plans, and \$297,000 has been allocated to the Parliamentary Information and Research Service to meet the demands we have been encountering from parliamentary committees. So it's gone to direct services to parliamentarians.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: So can you identify which services will receive priority spending?

Mr. William R. Young: In terms of the new money, as I said, it's for two analysts and the employee benefit plan contributions needed to cover that part of the cost of those analysts. Any of the other changes you will see in our estimates are a result of our attempt to achieve efficiencies through reorganization. These haven't been as a result of any additional funding received by the Library of Parliament, but through a process of internal reallocation.

• (1230)

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: This year's planned spending for the Parliamentary Budget Officer remains at roughly the same level as it was last year. Some parliamentarians and observers believe there should be a substantial increase for the PBO's budget. What is your opinion on that?

Mr. William R. Young: Well, I have an answer that's comprised of two parts. The first part, obviously, I explained in my remarks. I think I probably explained the second as well.

The first part is that we obviously are dealing with a circumstance in which spending has been constrained. The library overall got a 1.5% increase in its budget, and we were trying to act responsibly, given the economic circumstances that we're confronting. This is in line with the increases in both the Senate and the House of Commons. So the Parliamentary Budget Officer's budget was increased, as I said, as a result of that.

The second is obviously the issue of management challenges—I touched on this as well—which is that, given his legislative mandate, which has four parts to it... One part is proactive, which is the preparation of material related to Canada's fiscal and economic circumstances, and the other three parts are as a result of requests by parliamentarians or committees for specific costing information, additional economic analysis, etc.

Now, I have no information from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and have received no information from the Parliamentary Budget Officer about the level of demand for his services. I have no basis on which to make that decision. At the same time, I believe he has been functioning outside his legislative mandate, and that is an issue that I'm glad this committee has taken up, because it will help me clarify what Parliament expects from this service.

But in the meantime, I had no basis on which to increase funding. I had no evidence of any demands from parliamentarians, and at the same time, I had some evidence that he was functioning outside his legislative mandate. As the deputy head with responsibility for managing the library's funds and finances, I did not feel that I could, in all good conscience, exercise my functions as the deputy head and increase the level of funding to the Parliamentary Budget Officer under those circumstances.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Malhi. I'm sure there'll be time for additional questions later.

Senator Jaffer.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer (British Columbia, Lib.): Thank you.

I also want to join the chair in complimenting you and your staff for the excellent service you provide us.

I want to ask a question on what Mr. Malhi was saying, just to follow up. From what you have said, and just for clarification, is there confusion between you and the Parliamentary Budget Officer on what his mandate is?

Mr. William R. Young: Well, I think—

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Would that be—

Mr. William R. Young: Excuse me.

I think we have differing views on what the role of supporting Parliament is and might be. I would be delighted to expand on these, but I think that was for the next meeting.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: Yes—

Mr. William R. Young: But as originally conceived, I think you heard from Allan Darling and from the former parliamentarians about the way the PBO was established as an officer. It wasn't established as an office.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: No, I don't.... I have other questions.

A voice: It's just that we're here to talk about estimates—

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: I know. We can ask you that when you are here the next time.

I'll go now to the questions I had. The last time you were in front of the Library of Parliament committee you spoke about pull-back. To quote you, "...several months ago, before the economic crisis took hold, to submit reference levels for the whole library." My question to you was, who asked you to pull back?

I think from what you've told us today, you made that decision—that because of the crisis you needed to pull back.

Mr. William R. Young: Ultimately, yes.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: If I understood you clearly, you were saying that you consulted within your staff and decided in what areas to pull back. Did you consult at all with parliamentarians as to what their priorities were?

• (1235)

Mr. William R. Young: A lot of this was done while Parliament was prorogued. It was not sitting, and this committee hadn't been struck, so the opportunities to consult with parliamentarians were definitely limited. That is, in fact, the reason I made the proposal I made at the end of my presentation, because I sincerely would appreciate that opportunity for that type of—what shall we say—sustained attention.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: So from what I've understood from what you've said, where we're looking to go in the future is a working relationship where your clients—I'm going to call them clients, or people you service, the parliamentarians and the different committees—could help you also set priorities as to where parliamentary funds should be spent. Am I getting that right?

Mr. William R. Young: Well, yes. I think there's a fine line between you folks getting involved in operational details, which are probably not things you might want to discuss anyway.... But in terms of overall priorities and directions for the future and where we should be targeting our investment, I think it is a very appropriate role for this committee, because I see you as representing all of your colleagues in both chambers.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: So just because we know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's budget is an issue, if in the future we felt more money should be given to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, you would work with us if we saw there was a need to get more information.

Mr. William R. Young: Indeed, but you would also be asking both him and me hard questions about where the demand is, what we are spending our time on, how many people we really need—those kinds of issues.

The other thing I should say, though—and I alluded to this in my remarks about consulting parliamentarians—is that we did this, actually, in two ways.

First, we hired Harris/Decima to conduct a perception audit. They developed a scientific sample of members of Parliament and senators. I believe they talked to about 40. They developed structured interviews. They went through, with those MPs and senators, a series of questions about the nature and level of service that were expected and the nature and level of service that were provided.

Then we did it in a very public way last August, when I hosted the parliamentary librarians from all over the world. We had a group of MPs and senators talk about what they thought of what we were doing and where we were doing it well and not well. I believe Monsieur Bélanger was one of those who participated in that panel.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: In the past years, if I'm not mistaken, some of your budget on research has lapsed; it has gone back to the treasury. I understand that in 2007-08, \$1.3 million of your budget had lapsed. Do I have those figures right?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Just answer very quickly, Mr. Young.

Mr. William R. Young: Yes, \$1.2 million and change. That was about 3%, a little over 3% of the budget.

Senator Mobina S.B. Jaffer: May I just ask another question?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): We'll put you on the list for another question.

Mr. William R. Young: A lot of that is a result of the failure to fill positions, the delays in staffing, and all those things that happen. Now, the normal allowable lapse for a government department, which has been set by Treasury Board, where they're allowed to re-profile funding, is 5%.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

I just want to remind the committee once again that we are here to discuss the budget, the estimates, and that should be the focus of the discussions. Thank you very much.

Now we'll hear from Senator Banks.

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

Thank you, Mr. Young. It's nice to see you. You'll be happy to know that I'm not going to say the words "Parliamentary Budget Officer".

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Except just now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Senator Tommy Banks: All generalizations are false.

The process, as you described it, Mr. Young, is with respect to your budget and the various means by which you get your budget, which I presume include the main estimates and potentially, at least, the supplementary estimates. Do I have that right?

Mr. William R. Young: Well, the supplementary estimates are for one-time expenditures, yes.

Senator Tommy Banks: Do you from time to time receive budget funds through supplementary estimates?

Mr. William R. Young: We have for the last two years.

Senator Tommy Banks: I understand that you would not, however, from money that came—

Mr. William R. Young: We could not hire permanent staff with that money, no.

Senator Tommy Banks: You couldn't hire permanent staff.

Regarding the process, as you've outlined it, I understand that part of this committee's mandate is to advise Their Honours in respect of budget questions, among other things. Do I have that right?

• (1240)

Mr. William R. Young: That's what I hope.

Senator Tommy Banks: Describe the process when you go to Their Honours with the budget proposals you have arrived at, as you described before. Do you sit with them and do they discuss the priorities and discuss the amounts of the budget as they relate to the

—

Mr. William R. Young: Indeed, and they ask questions about issues where they feel they require additional information. They have said, "Well, you don't really need this for this year; why don't you put it off for another year?" We have a full and frank discussion.

Senator Tommy Banks: If I recall correctly, the provision of services, the demand for it, was increased very considerably by interparliamentary committees and the like. Having gone through it, it doesn't seem that you had, at the time this happened, a commensurate increase in the amount of money you have for it for the purpose of engaging analysts. Would that be a fair statement?

Mr. William R. Young: That's correct. This happened quite a long time ago. But I believe in the mid-nineties the responsibility for providing advisers to parliamentary associations was taken over, transferred to the Library of Parliament, and that was added to the work the analysts at the Library of Parliament already had, without any additional resources.

Senator Tommy Banks: In your view, did you get a commensurate additional resource...? Well, you just said you didn't.

Mr. William R. Young: We didn't.

Senator Tommy Banks: So you now serve a total of 66 committees or subcommittees or parliamentary committees. I believe 54 committees or subcommittees of Parliament is correct and 12 interparliamentary committees.

Mr. William R. Young: I have that here. I believe there are 59 committees and 12 parliamentary associations. We serve 20 Senate committees, 31 House of Commons committees, and 2 joint committees, for a total of 53, and then 12 parliamentary associations.

Senator Tommy Banks: Making 60, or whatever...

Mr. William R. Young: Sixty-five.

Senator Tommy Banks: And you do that with a complement of about 80 analysts now?

Mr. William R. Young: I believe there are 81 approved positions.

Senator Tommy Banks: As a percentage of the administrative costs, if I can put it that way, of running Parliament, has your budget as a percentage, to your knowledge, increased or decreased over the last little while? My reading of it is that as a percentage of what we do to make Parliament work, your Library of Parliament budget has decreased as a percentage.

Mr. William R. Young: I believe we've decreased slightly in terms of the percentage that's given to the House of Commons administration and the Senate administration, if you take out senators' budgets and members' budgets.

Senator Tommy Banks: But as you have said, and as we would all agree, the functions you provide with respect to analysts for individuals, because you get many thousands of requests from individuals as well as from committees and interparliamentary committees, are exponentially increasing.

Mr. William R. Young: I will tell you that for the fiscal year 2008-09, during which Parliament was prorogued or dissolved for a large chunk, we received 85,139 requests.

Senator Tommy Banks: All of which you do with a complement of about 400 people, including 81 analysts and—

Mr. William R. Young: We have 81 analysts, 24 librarians, and 13 library technicians in the Parliamentary Information and Research Service.

Senator Tommy Banks: The point, Chair, of my being here is because I have complained to Mr. Young in the past, not ever about the effort or the quality of service delivered by the people he has in the Library of Parliament, by the analysts or the researchers, which is superb, but rather that we lose them sometimes almost exponentially because of the limitations placed on the amount of money that we can afford to pay analysts and the number of analysts that he has and the work that they do. I'm sure you're all aware of the fact and the formation of those groups.

I urge you, Chair and members of the committee, in future, to suggest in your advice to Their Honours that as a percentage of parliamentary operating expenses, the Library of Parliament provide services that are absolutely essential to the working of Parliament and they need to have better resources attached to them.

Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, Senator. The point is taken.

Next, Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome all. Thank you for coming today.

First, let me start out by joining in with those who compliment you and your shop in the service that's provided. I can't think of better public servants doing a better job for the people of Canada than your analysts who we deal with on a regular basis. I can't say enough about your shop.

It's unusual to find you in this embattled situation. I used to sit on the Hamilton Public Library board when I was on Hamilton city council, and I never met a librarian yet who I would define as a warrior, and yet we do have a bit of a war going on—

• (1245)

Mr. William R. Young: I'm actually a historian.

Mr. David Christopherson: Are you a historian? Now we're getting into the vicious people. Those historians, you've got to watch them in dark alleys. They jump out at you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. David Christopherson: I respect the position you're in. I understand it. I'm not going to say everything's fine. I understand the

problem, what you've been trying to manage. I can hear in your voice how relieved you are that this committee is here to unravel this. You want to follow Parliament's rules, so we can get away from this. I have no doubt that this is your sole objective. I want to compliment you. I have questions, but it's not any kind of a grilling. I don't see you in that role, I really don't. I think you're caught in the middle.

However, there are a few things I need clarified from you. In your remarks today you said that confusion arose when the PBO position was established and for planning purposes a proposed amount was earmarked for the library. Over time, however, this hypothetical amount was portrayed as set in stone. Following the paperwork as best I can, if we get under a microscope and split hairs, that's technically correct. But it's also fair to say that an impression was left with parliamentarians and the public that this was a matter of routine, that the dollars were there. I cite your comments in front of the finance committee on February 13, 2008, where you said: "When the PBO function was included in the Parliament of Canada Act, the Treasury Board provided for an annual budget to support the officer, and this currently sits at \$2.7 million."

That wasn't used notionally. The way it was framed, you were pleased about it. You thought you had \$2.7 million and you'd be able to do the job. That's the impression you leave when you say it that way.

On March 12, 2009, you were in front of this committee, and things got a little foggier. You said:

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer function was conceived of, and shortly after the passage of the amendments to the Parliament of Canada Act in response to the accountability bill, I received a letter from Treasury Board, or there was a communication from Treasury Board, saying that there was a notional amount established for this particular function. That amount was not authorized.

I think we've gotten away from the notion that the \$2.7 million was there and everybody recognized it. Now there's a move away from it. It's splitting hairs. I don't argue that you're not correct, technically, when you say this amount was not authorized. This means that this final dollar figure wasn't in the final estimates. Correct?

Mr. William R. Young: It was never in the library estimates.

Mr. David Christopherson: Which takes me to my next question.

I'm going to be really careful here, because I'm going to talk about Speakers, and I have the greatest respect for them.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): We are here to discuss the budget.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm talking about the estimates process and the role the Speakers play in approving the estimates.

Okay. Here you are again on March 12, 2009:

Once that estimates submission is prepared sometime in the fall, I go to a meeting with the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Speaker of the Senate, accompanied by, usually, the director of finance and the assistant parliamentary librarian, where we present the business cases and the summary budget estimates....

The key thing here is:

Finally, the Speakers will agree on what the library's budget for the subsequent fiscal year should be. They sign off. That is transmitted to Treasury Board.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think this is maybe why you make the recommendation that we get a step in front of the Speakers. Under this process, the closest thing to parliamentary oversight would be this meeting with the two Speakers, who are acting at arm's length from the government but on behalf of the two houses they represent, using their best political judgment. It's fair to say that, unfortunately, both Speakers agreed that the \$2.7 million would not be in here. The amount that was approved, they agreed with.

• (1250)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Mr. Christopher.

Mr. Young.

Mr. William R. Young: The Parliamentary Budget Officer was invited to all the meetings during which the library's budget was discussed in full. All the other senior managers from the library—they had all presented business cases and we all knew we had to cut back—came to that meeting prepared to discuss and defend what a reasonable amount for those services ought to be. The PBO was not at those meetings, even though he was invited. He took the figure of \$2.7 million. He refused to budge. It was a notional amount, a hypothetical amount. There have been instances of other new officers and other new positions created or expanded in the FAA, where that notional amount was never asked for. The Speakers signed off.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Mr. Young.

We'll now go to Mr. Holder.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank our witnesses, particularly Mr. Young, for being here today. I'm very compelled by your formal comments, and particularly your thoughts in terms of the role of this committee in providing...I'll say support, but, really, oversight, if I may.

As I tried to review the reports on plans and priorities for 2009 and 2010, I was a bit challenged. I came up with a couple of things that I'd like to get your thoughts on. First, I have noted—actually, this goes to some notes we received with respect to today's meeting, and this was prepared by the Library of Parliament, by François Côté—that for 2009-10, the library has established two new strategic priorities. One is providing expertise in a digital environment and the second is investing in its people and its infrastructure. I'm not quite sure what that means, but who established those priorities?

Mr. William R. Young: It was my management team at a retreat we had in February.

Mr. Ed Holder: Thank you.

The follow-up is, when was the last time there was an external strategic review of the Library of Parliament, in terms of its roles, its

effectiveness, and its relationships, perhaps, with this committee amongst others? Do you have any sense of that?

Mr. William R. Young: We've had an ongoing series of reviews. I think the Auditor General, when she was here, mentioned that the last time the Office of the Auditor General looked at the Library of Parliament was in 1991. I reviewed that recently, actually. It's very interesting because we've acted on all the recommendations in that report. The only one that really hasn't been acted on is creating a standing joint committee as an effective review organization.

Mr. Ed Holder: And here we are. I'm sorry, sir, but did you say that was in 1991?

Mr. William R. Young: That was 1991. We've had an annual audit of our operations by KPMG for the last three years. It's come back clean.

Mr. Ed Holder: Forgive me again for interjecting slightly.

Mr. William R. Young: I've had an audit done on records and records management. I have had a modern comptrollership capacity check conducted by KPMG in 2006. I've had a review of our management practices conducted by a group called BMB Consulting Services. I've had other reviews done of corporate services, including publishing, governance structure—

Mr. Ed Holder: I'll accept, Mr. Young, that your audit practices have come back fine. That wasn't my question, though. My question was, thoughtfully, when was the last time there was a strategic review of the Library of Parliament from external sources, not audit of practices done and how well they have been done. I get all of that. But I'm asking about a broad, healthy review.

Mr. William R. Young: These are looks at our management structures that I was referring to, and our strategic practices and our priority-setting. All of those things have been looked at by these external consultants.

Mr. Ed Holder: Perhaps I'll ask another question, then. When was the last time the parliamentarians assisted you, or assisted the Library of Parliament, with respect to strategic review?

Mr. William R. Young: Probably not since I've been around. I would suggest that it was during the McGrath committee studies in 1985, when Parliament and parliamentarians examined all their practices and priorities. That was when committees like this one, and other committees of the House, received increased mandates.

Mr. Ed Holder: I submit to the chair that this might be a useful exercise.

I want to support a couple of comments in your letter, if I may. That really goes to the issue of the role of this committee and the absence of a board of internal review, where in fact we might play a role.

I have to tell you from my perspective that I really feel that Parliament in so many ways is losing control of the public purse. I have a real concern about that. I feel that when there's no oversight role, that weakens the role of Parliament.

We may have different perspectives. I come from a business background that suggests that we're all mindful of our dollars. I have no issue with how you spent yours, but I think Parliament's role would be well served to take a more interactive, positive role with the Library of Parliament as it relates to this committee.

One thing I did notice, and I was curious about, is that you're responsible for the budget of the Library of Parliament. I look at our role, and I look at the Standing Orders, and by virtue of Standing Order 108(4)(a), it gives us the ability to be able to interact and set the terms, as a committee, in terms of the role we want to play with the Library of Parliament. I would urge us again to consider that.

What I'd like to ask you, though, is this. In the fall there was an expense.... Because we're being asked to approve the estimates, I'm simply trying to get a handle on how much control you have on the expenses that go out. In particular, there was one where the Parliamentary Budget Officer used the services of both an external lawyer and an external marketing or media agency as it related to a press conference associated with the costs associated with Afghanistan. I presume those expenses come under your purview. What role would you have had in terms of dealing with those?

• (1255)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Mr. Holder.

Mr. Ed Holder: Would you allow him to answer the question, though, Chair?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Yes, I will allow him to answer the question with a short response.

Mr. William R. Young: We have a contracting policy, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has delegated authority, so those contracts were let under his delegated authority. It's the same as any other service head within the Library of Parliament; those authorities have limits, and those authorities are managed by corporate services. It fell within his delegated authority. I would suggest, potentially, that we do have a communications function within the Library of Parliament.

It was in fact one of the kinds of integrated services that I thought would benefit parliamentarians—having the PBO in the library.

Mr. Ed Holder: Could we know those costs?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Mr. Ed Holder: Could we know those costs, Mr. Chair?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Would you like to be added to the list to speak again?

Mr. Ed Holder: I was going to let him just answer that last question, sir.

Mr. William R. Young: I'd be delighted to table that with the committee, if you'd like to have that.

Mr. Ed Holder: Thank you very much.

Mr. William R. Young: Would that be acceptable?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Mr. Braid.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Young, thank you again for appearing before us today, for your presentation, and for your very thoughtful proposals, in terms of what we might wish to consider with respect to the mandate of the Library of Parliament committee and how we might help to improve oversight and operations.

I have just a couple of questions with respect to the budget formulation and finalization process.

Was the process you went through last year for the 2009-10 budget any different from what it was in the past? There was nothing unique about it?

Mr. William R. Young: There was nothing unique at all.

Mr. Peter Braid: Okay.

Could you elaborate a little bit on the process you went through to determine which areas of the library would get which level of resources?

Mr. William R. Young: How did we do it?

As I said, the executive team has ongoing discussions, and when it became obvious that we were not going to get our wish list, and we'd look silly if we actually submitted the wish list, we got together and looked at what the areas of greatest risk for not moving forward would be. One of those was the area identified by Senator Banks, which is PIRS, the research branch, as well as the need for additional services and analysts for committees, because there is an ongoing very strong demand from parliamentarians for those.

Sonia L'Heureux, the assistant parliamentary librarian, has just completed a reorganization of the research branch and put in place a strategic analysis unit, which will allow us to anticipate issues and prepare material in advance. Quite frankly, as you probably know, these kinds of reorganizational exercises succeed best if there's a little bit of grease to the wheels. We didn't have any grease to the wheels, so in order to make that part of the organization work best for you, we looked at how we could reallocate internally and support Sonia's work within her branch.

The other one is IM/IT. The library has long functioned, I believe, at a disadvantage in its use of IM/IT capacity. We have services provided by the House of Commons. We work very closely with the House of Commons. We pay them about \$600,000 a year under an MOU. It's the largest contract we have in the library. But those services haven't been managed well by the Library of Parliament. We have something like—they'll tell me if I'm wrong—135 separate applications. You don't need all these things. We're spending a lot of money supporting things that are fragile, out of date, or not useful. I strongly believe that in order to provide better service for you, we actually do need a far better managed and better funded IM/IT capacity. I say basically that in the letter at the beginning of the RPP this year.

• (1300)

Mr. Peter Braid: Very good. I don't mean to interrupt, but I want to make sure I don't run out of time.

Were all the key stakeholders on your management team given full opportunity to provide input into the budget formulation process?

Mr. William R. Young: Yes.

Mr. Peter Braid: Are any staff within the Library of Parliament eligible to claim overtime?

Mr. William R. Young: Yes.

Mr. Peter Braid: Which staff are they, and in which areas?

Mr. William R. Young: I think any of the unionized staff are eligible to claim overtime.

Mr. Peter Braid: Over the past year, have you seen any difference in the amount of overtime being claimed?

Mr. William R. Young: Overtime is traditionally claimed mainly by analysts who support committees. Committees want their draft reports ready the day after tomorrow, and the only way you can do that is by working all night. That has traditionally been the largest element of our overtime. It has actually decreased in the last year because Parliament hasn't been sitting and the analysts haven't been working all night.

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you very much.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Mr. Braid, your time allocation has run out. If you'd like to be on the list to follow up on a question, we'll certainly put you there.

Thank you, Mr. Young.

Mr. Boughen.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Let me add my voice to those of my colleagues in welcoming you here this afternoon, Mr. Young, and your colleagues.

In hearing your presentation and looking at other data and documents, a couple of questions arise. You've alluded to some of the answers to these, but maybe this will give you a chance to expand on them a little.

How are the library's draft estimates currently handled? Are there ways to improve the process, whichever way you're working now? Besides scrutinizing these estimates, is there a role for the joint committee in the process, in that whole estimate idea?

Is any worth given to budgets one year past the current budget year, a five-year plan, or that kind of operation?

Mr. William R. Young: I've pretty much outlined how we go through the budget process. I sincerely believe there is a greater role for this committee in assisting us to set priorities. Obviously that would involve timelines that go beyond one year. To have some sense of a secure path for a priority, for example IM/IT, you ideally need a three-year plan. That's what my director of IT has prepared.

Given this process, we've been going forward with one-year bits and pieces. It would be wonderful to have this committee, or a subcommittee of this committee, look at that plan and say you really

think it's the right direction for the next three years. That would give me a certain level of confidence in going forward with proposals on spending for three years on IM/IT.

It would be a gift from heaven. Can I say that?

• (1305)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Sure you can.

Currently that's not happening. Unfortunately, right now the whole budgetary process is almost a kind of knee-jerk reaction to influences you see internally.

Mr. William R. Young: That's correct. I can identify several areas across the library where I feel that kind of ongoing support.... Some of it is sunset funding.

For example, we are looking at starting to digitize the debates of the House of Commons and the Senate. This would be a huge project. Eventually it would hopefully lead to all the parliamentary papers.... It would be a multi-year project with sunset funding and would last for a definitive number of years. We have partners, but it would be great to have the level of security to know we could proceed with that project with some confidence, partner with Library and Archives Canada over the course of it, and know we would be able to move forward .

Another area is learning and access services and the learning programs we're trying to set up for parliamentarians and their staff. We're trying set up an annual curriculum, but a lot of this is ad hoc, hit and miss: "Are we able to do it this year? Can we do this now?" To have a long-term approved plan for this would assure both you and your staff that you would have access to the kind of training and seminar program that would benefit you.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thank you, Mr. Young.

Thanks, Chair.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Ms. Bennett.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Thanks very much.

I'd like to follow Senator Banks' line of questioning on how well we think you all do with very little money. There is the proposal that this committee could play a role in really figuring out what you need to do so we can do our job better, which is the purpose of the library.

Whether or not it was the study the library helped with on the Parliament we want, everything we've been doing is about understanding that to do our jobs as parliamentarians and to hold government to account we need newer and better information—at tremendous odds, compared to the amount government and Parliament have, as a percentage.

So even in reviewing estimates, I thought we were trying to make sure that each committee had the ability to do annualized performance reports and estimates and keep it going, in the way you used to help me, Mr. Young, when you were my researcher on the disability committee. You would quite often whisper loudly, “They said that last year”, when we wanted to know why something hadn't happened. You were the institutional memory for that committee on where the money was going.

I was privileged to be at the conference you held last summer and to meet some of the people at the C2D2 conference. When you look at Soledad Ferraro's shop in Chile, or John Pullinger's shop at the U. K. Parliament, where are we on the resources our library has, or resources to Parliament, in an international framework?

If there were a process for asking for more money, it sounds like you would want a strategic review that we would be involved in, and then some sort of long-term planning over five years. What are some of the things we're not doing, like using technology on committees or helping members of Parliament do citizen engagement better, that they seem to do better in Chile? Help us with what that would look like. What resources would it take to dream in technicolor about getting us the best possible service in the world?

• (1310)

Mr. William R. Young: Let me start with your first comment about where we sit internationally.

The Library of Parliament probably has the broadest mandate of any parliamentary library in the world. We serve two chambers. Many serve only one, for example, in the U.K. We staff committees. In the U.K., Pullinger's folks provide analysis to members of Parliament, but they do not staff committees. And we provide a huge amount of education outreach through the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy and contact with teachers, as well as running the parliamentary guide program. I don't know of any other institution that has that big a job to do.

In terms of resources, we have approximately the same budget and the same number of people as the U.K. House of Commons library, but they also have the U.K. House of Lords library. And they've worked out a deal there. The House of Lords library looks at and deals more with records and records management issues. The House of Commons library is much more focused on the research area. It has developed an education outreach model based on ours. Nonetheless, there are two of them. We're one. It's a congressional system, so it's really difficult to compare.

I think the personality of their congressional librarian has a lot to do with the effectiveness and the initiatives that have been undertaken in Chile. She's very interested in web-based initiatives, and she's been able to move forward in that area. We're looking at a lot of this in terms of our strategic analysis unit. That's what Sonia has been trying to put in place. But we have no staff there.

I will tell you, quite frankly, that is one of the places we were looking to move people into, to be able to develop some of these kinds of blogs, wikis, much more web-based approaches to providing you with information. Because we didn't get any money, that's one of the areas that just doesn't have the staff.

There are some wonderful people there. They're doing what they can. They're doing a marvellous job with the resources they have, but it's really blocked us.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Ms. Bennett.

Monsieur Asselin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Young, in view of the services that the Library of Parliament is required to provide to parliamentarians and the Senate, and in view of the salary scales of your senior employees and those in the collective agreements, you have no doubt had to, as the Parliamentary Librarian, prepare budget forecasts before the House of Commons approves the budget, specifying the amount you would like to receive to be able to operate and meet your objectives.

The government gave you a 1.5 percent increase. Does this exceed your expectations? Is it enough? I cannot answer for you, but I would like to know, given the choices you had to make on the basis of this increase, whether the poet is still essential for the proper operation of the Library.

• (1315)

Mr. William R. Young: The poet's duties were established under the Act.

[*English*]

It was created by an amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act. A small annual stipend allows the poet to travel.

In the grand scheme of things, given the mandate of the poet with regard to promoting culture, promoting poetry in Canada, the consumption of resources is quite small.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Mr. Young, that was only one example. I would not want to spend too much time on the costs related to the poet, but I would nevertheless like you to tell us how much it represents annually. In particular, I would like to know whether the 1.5 percent increase you received is enough. Are you likely to run a deficit at the year end or will you be able to function smoothly and meet all of your objectives?

Mr. William R. Young: I don't know how to say it in French.

[*English*]

It's okay to keep the lights on, but we're not moving forward that quickly. It's 1.5%. It will keep the lights on—

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Mr. Young, you appear to be very uncomfortable about telling us that given the salary scales of your senior employees and those in the collective agreements, and given the services you have to provide to the Senate Chamber, it will be virtually impossible for you to function with the 1.5 percent increase the government has allowed you for your operating budget. In fact, you will have a shortfall and will have to cut services or staff. You will have to reduce your expenditures somehow. If you had anticipated needing a 2.5 percent or a 3 percent increase — which is approximately equal to the cost of living increase — to meet your objectives and provide the services you need to deliver, but you were only given 1.5 percent, then you must have had to make difficult choices. What were they?

[English]

Mr. William R. Young: I agree with you that 1.5% did force some very difficult choices, and we've been looking at these choices for the next year. We've been having to target things. We've realigned research services. We've tried to refine our planning and learning agenda. But at the same time, we've had to look at cuts in various service areas in order to, for example, support the research branch and to support the IM/IT agenda. We've been looking at the collections budget. We've been looking at the nature of the learning and access services that Dianne Brydon provides, with a view to what the core activities are and where we can postpone.

A lot of it has been postponing. Where we've laid a base, we tried to preserve the base, but we've had to postpone huge numbers of activities. For example, we have a teacher's leader program. We've had to ask to what extent that is essential under these circumstances. To what extent do we need a guide in the main library? To what extent do we need to provide additional staff for open houses when Parliament is open during Christmas season? There are these kinds of things. We've been looking at all of these activities across the board.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, Mr. Asselin.

Mr. Bélanger.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

[English]

I suppose I'll start with you, Mr. Chair. Am I mistaken in my belief that these estimates have been approved by Parliament already?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): We're going to be voting on the estimates at the end of this meeting. We'll take the last five minutes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That's not my question. Am I mistaken in my believe that these estimates have already been approved by both houses of Parliament?

•(1320)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Maybe Mr. Young can answer the question.

Mr. Young.

Mr. William R. Young: I know the Speakers have approved.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Were they not included in the main estimates presented to Parliament in February and voted upon in March?

[Translation]

M. Gérard Asselin: Normally yes.

[English]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So it's the exercise that we're doing that is rhetorical, not my question. I just wanted to flag that. That's why I'm going to ask questions, and I hope you don't try to stop me, Mr. Chair, because I'm referring to comments made by Mr. Young.

You say in your comments, Mr. Young, and I quote you:

This is exactly what happened in the case of the PBO. A notional amount—\$2.7 million—was identified, but never officially requested or authorized.

Further on you say:

To sum up, the Library simply cannot determine whether the budget pressures asserted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer are due to demand for his services, or whether they arise from his decision to operate outside of the framework established by law.

What do you mean by “officially”? Why is that word “officially” in your sentence?

Mr. William R. Young: Do you mean “officially requested”?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes. You say “officially requested”. Does that mean that you did not, as the chief librarian, receive a request from the PBO for \$2.7 million?

Mr. William R. Young: I received a business case from the PBO, the same as I received a business case from my other service heads with regard to funding they wanted for the current fiscal year, which at that point was the upcoming fiscal year. By “officially requested”, what I meant was that it was signed off by the Speakers and transmitted to the Treasury Board.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I understand, but are you at liberty to share with us the amount that was requested in the business case from the PBO?

Mr. William R. Young: It was \$2.8 million.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

Was it submitted to the Speakers?

Mr. William R. Young: Yes. The original draft submission was, yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Okay, so the decision not to submit... Was that submitted, then, to Treasury Board by the Speakers?

Mr. William R. Young: No. This was in our initial budget discussions.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I understand that, but I just want to make sure we're clear on that fact that the money was not requested by the Speakers.

Mr. William R. Young: That's correct.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

I suspect you can't answer whether or not they will be in supplementary estimates (A) because they haven't been tabled yet, but has there been any request, to your knowledge, forwarded to Treasury Board vis-à-vis the library and vis-à-vis the Parliamentary Budget Officer for the supplementary estimates (A), which we are expecting next week?

Mr. William R. Young: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Okay. Then I want to explore something else.

In determining the budget pressures, can you tell us to what extent the PBO used the services of the library, if I can put it that way?

In the reference, and I go back to the act, the PBO is authorized to direct staff—which I have always thought was a clumsy formulation, because it's a possible source of conflict—to help him in his duties. Has there been an attempt to quantify the use and the value of the use of library staff for the PBO functions?

Mr. William R. Young: I asked that question myself.

We have admin services staff. At one point we tried to do a calculation of what a full-fledged PBO would cost the library with a view to looking at that in terms of his budget. The cost, I believe, was about \$256,000, but that was for administrative services, HR, finance, communications, translation, and those kinds of things; however, as far as I know, the PBO has outsourced all but HR services and finance.

• (1325)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Just for our colleagues' sake, we should be reminding—

Mr. William R. Young: There have been some requests for reference services, but that's been about it.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Monsieur Bélanger, you're over the time limit. We'll put you back on at the end. Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Let me just start and then I'll get to my question.

It seems to me that overall we have two spheres of conflict. One is directly in your shop, and the other is what the will of Parliament is, ultimately.

In the first sphere I have some appreciation for the management situation you're in, given that you've been handed a square peg while all you've got are round holes. The reason it's square, as opposed to your usual round, is that there's a different interpretation by the new PBO, which you disagree with. Part of why we're here is to sort that out.

Hold on; I don't need you to respond just yet, sir.

On the other side, we have the new PBO, who does not want to be co-opted, and I'm just assuming this; I've never spoken to him or anyone in his shop, ever. However, I would assume that his concern was, "If I get into the process with you and I don't ultimately get what I want, I'm co-opted into the process, and then where do I go after that?" That's probably why there was resistance to being part of your process.

We have these two different worlds happening, and the bigger one is deciding how independent we want that office to be. I'm—

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Mr. Christopherson, we are here to discuss the budget and the estimates. Let's please focus our questioning on that.

Mr. David Christopherson: I appreciate that, but I'm talking about the amount of money—

An hon. member: *C'est juste du réchauffé pour la semaine prochaine.*

Mr. David Christopherson: Just a minute.

I'm talking about the amount of money available for the person to do their job. If you deny them money, you deny them the ability to do the job. So I don't see how the hell I'm out of line, Chair.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Well, I'm just reminding you that we are talking about the budgetary...and I thought you were getting into the operation of it. We're focusing on the budget, the estimates.

Mr. David Christopherson: I understand, sir. Fair enough.

On the estimates, on the budget, in the process, we have two different views of how the numbers ultimately ought to be arrived at. One is the librarian; one is the Parliamentary Budget Office.

What I'd like to know is that, given what I see as why he didn't participate in your process—and we'll determine whether that was right or wrong by how we ultimately frame this—

An hon. member: *[Inaudible—Editor]*

Mr. David Christopherson: Just a minute.

Had the legitimate case been made—this is a hypothetical question about process, not dollars—how would you have dealt with that process-wise, given that it was above the amount of money that you had been allocated, but you agree, notionally, with the report in front of you that the money requested, \$2.8 million, could be justified? What would be your recommendation, process-wise, to the Speakers, who were the ones who could amend that estimate before it went forward?

How would you have dealt with that? If everything had gone along tickety-boo, and at the end of the day \$2.8 million is fully justified, but it's outside what you could do, given that the PBO didn't want to have Peter robbed to pay Paul, how would you have handled that recommendation?

Is there a process where you can request more than you've been allocated? Is there an exceptional process for the Speakers to go to Treasury Board? How would that work?

Mr. William R. Young: There is no exception process. My estimates are submitted at the same time as those of the House and the Senate. They're signed off by the Speakers. I have two, the House and Senate administration have one, and they proceed to Treasury Board.

Mr. David Christopherson: If I can, Chair, that's where the rub is in terms of the budget and dealing with the Parliamentary Budget Office. If there isn't the independence of controlling the budget, and clearly there isn't, then how much independence is there in terms of their functions?

I would just say that if we had the Auditor General in the same situation, we would never get the services from the Auditor General that we now receive, not in the same fashion.

Mr. William R. Young: With respect, the business case would have to be prepared based on the same questions—demand for services, use of services, costing of services. In all those things the same question would come up one way or the other.

Quite frankly, the model that Allan Darling developed for the library with regard to the Parliamentary Budget Officer would in fact cost a lot less than an independent office with a whole set of independent services.

Mr. David Christopherson: Of course, it depends on what your goal is. Is it only to save money or is it to provide a service?

Mr. William R. Young: But then the nature of and demand for those services need to be demonstrated.

• (1330)

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm just saying that you can make the same argument about the Auditor General. You can make every one of those arguments you've just made, yet we spend more money to have her as an independent and she answers directly to the committee. This is where you've mentioned the estimates process being changed here.

Mr. William R. Young: The Auditor General, in that sense, is subject to the kind of scrutiny that I asked you, in my remarks, to put in place.

Mr. David Christopherson: But that didn't happen in this process, though, the same process we have with the Auditor General.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Mr. Christopherson, your time allocation is up. If you'd like to be added to the list to ask a further question, I can certainly do that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Braid.

Mr. Peter Braid: That's actually a good segue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Young, in your presentation I was particularly struck by one statement you made, and I quote:

To sum up, the library simply cannot determine whether the budget pressures asserted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer are due to demand for his services, or whether they arise from his decision to operate outside of the framework established by law.

With respect to that statement, is there any indication that the demands for the services of the PBO have not been met?

Mr. William R. Young: I honestly have no information about the nature and level of the demand and whether those demands have been met.

For the rest of the library, we have a tracking system in place. We know when a request comes in and when a request is due to be given to a member. We monitor and do quality control on those requests, and they go to the member. Hopefully the statistics show that we're pretty good at meeting our deadlines.

With the Parliamentary Budget Officer, I have none of that information.

Mr. Peter Braid: In your view, if the PBO operated within the framework established by the law, do you feel that he would have sufficient resources to meet demand?

Mr. William R. Young: That is a very difficult question. I don't think I could answer it.

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you very much. Those are all the questions I had.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Mr. Braid.

Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you. I'll try to pick up where I left off, Mr. Young.

I think I heard you say that some of the \$250,000 worth of services that a PBO within the library would benefit from included accounting or bookkeeping—financial aspects. Given that the library has that information, is there a way that you and your staff could give us a sense of the value of the work the PBO has done outside that could have been done within?

Mr. William R. Young: I believe we have those figures. If you like, I can submit them to the committee,

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I think that would be very useful, and perhaps itemized, to the extent.... I don't want to be—

Mr. William R. Young: We keep track of our contracts. Lise Chartrand is a very strict mistress of the library's funds.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: “Categories” is what I meant by itemization.

The other area of interest is the latter part of the sentence that I picked up on and then Mr. Braid picked up on: a “decision to operate outside the framework established by law”. You make another reference to that. Then you refer to staffing.

Is that the extent of...?

I have two sets of questions. I want to go for the other one first. I'll come back to this, if I have time.

On page 3 of your comments, you said:

So what's happened since? Well, once the PBO was created, the Library proposed a structure, staffing levels and operational plan based on two key provisions of the Federal Accountability Act: first, that approximately three-quarters of PBO's main functions would be demand-driven based on the requests of parliamentarians and committees. And second, that the PBO would be integrated within the Library of Parliament.

It's the second one I want to focus on here. To what extent would it be integrated?

Mr. William R. Young: It would be in terms of communications, translation—all those support functions. But in addition, I've observed that things such as costing requests that might come in have both a policy and a financial component. Quite frankly, we have a group of economists who are very good policy analysts. The kind of work they could do together in analyzing the policy implications of a costing request and then doing the costing request demonstrates to me a way of working together that would ultimately provide members of Parliament and senators with a much more complete and appropriate answer to some of their questions and queries.

• (1335)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Section 74 of the act says in part:

The direction and control of the Library of Parliament and the officers, clerks and servants connected therewith is vested in the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons assisted, during each session, by a joint committee to be appointed by the two Houses.

That's us.

If the will of this committee were to be to revise the budget of the library, including the PBO budget, would you be prepared to submit to the government in supplementary estimates (B) such an increase?

Mr. William R. Young: Of course. I think in the interests of prudent fiscal and financial management that I am responsible for, you'd have to understand that supplementary estimates (B) are one-time costs and that there would be concomitant responsibilities to be exercised by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. They're not ongoing base budget amounts.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I understand that, sir, but I've seen the number of departments that also have—and I'm not talking about the library—the ability to shift internal costs from budget to budget. Sometimes they need permission to do that—there are different votes; I understand that.

Mr. William R. Young: The library is so tight that we would not be able to do that sort of thing. It would involve, for example, \$800,000 or \$900,000. I looked at this, and it would mean losing either 10 or 11 jobs. The average salary in the library is about \$75,000, so it's 11 or 12 jobs across the library, and these would be most likely analysts' jobs. Or it would mean cancelling the Teacher's Institute on Canadian Democracy, which costs about half a million bucks, plus ceasing to print *Quorum*, which costs about \$600,000, or another program. It would mean a program cut in order for the library to continue—

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, Mr. Bélanger.

Your time allocation is up. If you have time at the end, I'll add it to the end, if you like, but we'll go to Dr. Bennett.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I'd like you to let him conclude. I just want to hear something here. May I?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Make it very brief.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Am I hearing you say, Mr. Young, that if the will of this committee were to recommend to the government to allocate the money, you'd want it to be operational funding?

Mr. William R. Young: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much.

Dr. Bennett.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you.

I want to dive back in on how parliamentarians have been consulted about where we want to go. As a member of this committee for a long time, on and off, I want to remind the committee that in the paper that was done with Deb Gray and Yves Morin and me, "The Parliament We Want", on page 20 the recommendation was—and this study consulted many members of Parliament—that:

If Parliamentarians are to become knowledge brokers, they will require significantly more resources for independent policy analysis

As part of the reform package, Parliament should consider:

either as independent offices, or through the Library of Parliament, creating "parliamentary advisor" positions on broad, cross-cutting issues that would be independent from those who advise government (e.g., the office of a parliamentary science advisor);

It is very interesting that at that time, when there was a bit more money around, the thing that seemed to be the stickler was that the area in which Parliament would need independent advice was that of a parliamentary science advisor. It then came to be a question of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

But it speaks to the prolonged time we have thought that the Library of Parliament requires more resources, or that there need to be more resources to help parliamentarians do their jobs. This isn't new.

I hope, Mr. Chair, that with the help of the library this committee could be part of developing a process by which we get them more money.

• (1340)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Mr. Young, do you have any comments?

Mr. William R. Young: I'm glad to get any support I can.

An hon. member: Hallelujah!

Mr. William R. Young: Yes, hallelujah!

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you, Ms. Bennett.

Mr. Plamondon? No?

Are there any other people wishing to ask a question?

Seeing no other questions, I wish to thank you very much for appearing here, Mr. Young, Ms. Stimpson, and Ms. Chartrand.

Members of the committee, we have a bit of business to do. It's to pass and vote on the main estimates—to vote on vote 10.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, could we dispense with that? It's been approved by the House of Commons and the Senate.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): I think the interim has been approved, but we've been asked to vote on this so that we can submit it to the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

L'hon. Mauril Bélanger: The main estimates were approved.

[*English*]

These are the main estimates we're talking about. They've been approved, in the House of Commons and in the Senate. They've been approved.

They were deemed reported by us.

A voice: Not yet; they're deemed reported at the end of May.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Madame, it's done.

A voice: It's the end of May.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Order, please.

I don't see that it should be a problem if we pass a vote on this today. If it is a duplication, it's a duplication.

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Department

Vote 10—Program expenditures.....\$35,649,000

Shall vote 10, less the amount voted in interim supply, carry?

(Vote 10 agreed to on division)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Shall I report the main estimates for 2009-10 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Peter Goldring): Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. The meeting is adjourned.

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