

**COMMITTEES AND ESTIMATES:
POWERS, PERFORMANCE AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES**

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APPENDIX: PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING CYCLE



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COMMITTEES AND ESTIMATES: POWERS, PERFORMANCE AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

This paper explores the role of parliamentary committees in reviewing departmental spending estimates. Its first section summarizes the central powers of parliamentary committees, and their limits. The second outlines how these powers have been defined in procedure and practice since Confederation, and notes important changes that have occurred. A concluding section explores possible strategies that committees can use to maximize their influence within the estimates process, as it currently operates.

COMMITTEE POWERS

The disposition of the government's spending estimates ultimately rests with the House of Commons. However, since the late 1960s, the House has referred all estimates to committees for review before finally voting on them.⁽¹⁾ The role that committees have come to perform is twofold. First, committees provide a forum for relatively informal discussion and debate, intended to enhance the detailed scrutiny of estimates. Second, they are authorized to vote separately on each item referred to them (presented as numbered Votes); these Votes, reported back to the House, then provide a basis for its consideration of the estimates.⁽²⁾

When they vote on estimates, committees are subject to the constraints that apply generally to Parliament with respect to money votes. Under the Westminster model of parliamentary government, the Crown alone is entitled to initiate public expenditure; the role of Parliament is to consider expenditures recommended by the Crown, and either authorize them or

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- (1) The Main Estimates are referred to committees under Standing Order 81(4). More information about the supply process can be found in Jean Dupuis, *Appropriations and the Business of Supply*, PRB 04-05E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 1 May 2004.
 - (2) If Commons committees do not report to the House on the main estimates referred to them by 31 May, they are deemed to have reported.

withhold authorization. The principle of the royal recommendation, which precludes parliamentary consideration of expenditures not recommended by the Crown, is enshrined in the *Constitution Act, 1867*, which provides that:

It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any Vote, Resolution, Address or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue, or of any Tax or Impost, to any Purpose that has not been first recommended to that House by Message of the Governor General in the Session in which such Vote, Resolution, Address or Bill is proposed.⁽³⁾

The practical effect of this principle on committees reflects its application to Parliament itself. Committees can reduce the amount of a Vote, by amending it, but they have no authority to increase a Vote. Also, proposals to transfer funds from one Vote to another are out of order, since they would have the effect of increasing a Vote.⁽⁴⁾

There are several fundamental procedural restrictions, not directly related to the principle of the royal recommendation, that also define what committees can do with the estimates:

- It is not in order to propose an amendment reducing the amount of a Vote to zero, since the proper course in this case is to vote against the motion “Shall the Vote carry?”
- Statutory items may not be amended, since they are included in the estimates for information purposes only.
- Finally, since it is the estimates which have been referred to a committee, it is the estimates (amended or not) which must be reported back, and substantive recommendations or explanations are not accepted as part of this report. Substantive findings and recommendations may, however, be presented in a separate report, since committees have the power to study and report on “all matters relating to the mandate, management and operation of the department or departments of government which are assigned to them.”⁽⁵⁾

(3) See *Constitution Act, 1867*, R.S.C. 1985, s. 54, as cited in Robert Marleau and Camille Montpetit, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, House of Commons, Ottawa, 2000, p. 709.

(4) These powers and limitations, as well as those outlined below, are based on Marleau and Montpetit (2000), which is the definitive source of procedural interpretation and background information relating to the Parliament of Canada. See also Arthur Beauchesne, *Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, 3rd ed., Canada Law Book Company, Ltd., Toronto, 1943, esp. p. 178.

(5) House of Commons, Standing Order 108(2).

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

Within the more or less constant requirements of the constitutional framework, there is room for a wide variety of processes and practices relating to the estimates. The current role of committees is the result of attempts over the years by Parliament to adapt to new challenges and a changing environment. Successes and failures thus far can provide important guidance for the future.

Between 1867 and 1968, the main forum for the consideration of estimates was the House of Commons sitting as a Committee of Supply for the purpose of debating estimates and supply. During the early years, especially the pre-World War I period, the looseness of internal controls on government spending posed major challenges for even the possibility of parliamentary oversight. For example, individual departments engaged in a variety of practices essentially beyond Parliament's control, including borrowing from commercial banks when annual budgets ran out and frequent reliance on Governor General's Warrants (which were reported to Parliament only after the fact). Moreover, the number of sets of estimates presented to Parliament began to multiply in the 1890s to four, or even five or six, in each fiscal year. In the sessions of both 1904 and 1910-1911, seven separate sets of estimates were presented.⁽⁶⁾

Within Parliament, until 1955, the introduction of the estimates of each department into supply required a separate motion, providing extensive opportunities for dilatory debate and delay. As well, the introduction of each motion was treated as an occasion for general discussion of a department and its policies, resulting in a wide-ranging debate similar to that which now occurs in response to the Speech from the Throne or the budget. The result, in practice, was that substantive consideration of the estimates was frequently limited to a series of late or all-night sittings held at the very end of a session, with estimates for entire departments being considered and adopted in an hour or two.

The limited size and scope of government in the early years enhanced the ability of parliamentarians to scrutinize and debate estimates in relatively great detail. However, the rapid growth of government after World War I made detailed scrutiny progressively more difficult. By 1950, a parliamentary process that remained in many ways essentially unchanged from that of 1867 was resulting in decisions about government spending levels that were 300 times higher than those of the 1860s, relating to a vastly more complex structure of programs and activities.

(6) See Norman Ward, *The Public Purse – A Study in Canadian Democracy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1951, p. 230 ff.

Concerns about the effectiveness of the Committee of Supply, and dissatisfaction with the form and substance of Parliament's role concerning the estimates, date back virtually to Confederation. Starting in the 1920s, a series of reforms were introduced, including: restrictions on debate to enhance the focus on substance; changes to the format of the information supplied to Parliament to make it more understandable to Members; expansion of the content of the estimates; and experiments with the use of smaller committees to examine some types of estimates.⁽⁷⁾ However, the changes did little to reduce concerns about the effectiveness of Parliament in its fundamental oversight role concerning government spending.

Major reform came in 1968, with the adoption of new procedures under which all estimates were referred to standing committees, and (in the case of main estimates) either reported or deemed reported back to the House by 31 May. These reforms were intended to improve the substantive oversight of government spending, in committee, while streamlining debate on the estimates within the House. They marked the beginning of a phase of committee reform which continued with important expansions of committee powers in the 1980s, directed to enhancing the role of the backbench Member of Parliament and the broader effectiveness of Parliament in policy development as well as financial oversight roles. Incremental procedural reform relating to committees continues to this day.⁽⁸⁾

Starting in 1996, the focus of reform has broadened to include attempts to improve the quality of the financial information available to Parliament. The Improved Reporting to Parliament Project complements earlier changes to the powers of committees with key reforms to the information Parliament receives. An effort is being made to refocus reporting away from primarily quantitative outputs (cases heard, brochures issued, etc.) to higher-level outcomes that show how departmental activities make a difference to citizens. Second, the departmental reports previously released as Part III of the main estimates have been disaggregated into two reports:

- a Departmental Performance Report released in November of each year, which outlines the department's goals and objectives, and progress against them; and
- a departmental Report on Plans and Priorities released along with the main estimates in late February, which outlines the department's future goals and action plan for achieving them.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 260.

(8) See Jack Stilborn, *Parliamentary Reform and the House of Commons*, TIPS 131E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, March 2006.

Thus far, however, the verdict on the practical success of recent reforms has been mixed at best, among both scholars and parliamentarians.⁽⁹⁾ Successive committee reports have expressed continuing dissatisfaction on the part of Members of Parliament themselves:

- The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concluded (1998, Catterall-Williams Report) that “the vast sums of money spent by government are subjected to only perfunctory parliamentary scrutiny,” and made 52 recommendations for wide-ranging change.⁽¹⁰⁾
- A follow-up report by the same Committee (2000, Szabo Report) continued to call for changes, notably improvements to information and enhanced staff support.⁽¹¹⁾
- The Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons (2001, Kilger Report) proposed the consideration of two sets of estimates by a Committee of the Whole as a partial remedy for what it saw as long-standing deficiencies in the handling of estimates.⁽¹²⁾
- In the 37th Parliament, a report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (Valeri Report) concluded that, despite progress in recent years, most parliamentary committees continued to give departmental estimates relatively cursory attention, and that strengthened scrutiny was urgently needed.⁽¹³⁾ While it called for improvements to the information provided to Parliament, more extensive attention was given to the need for Parliament to make better use of information already available.

(9) For an excellent overview of the evolution of parliamentary procedures relating to the estimates, and assessments by scholars and parliamentarians, see the report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, *The Business of Supply: Completing the Circle of Control*, December 1998, pp. 7-16; available on-line at:
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/36/1/PRHA/Studies/Reports/prharp51-e.htm>.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 3.

(11) House of Commons, Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, *Improved Reporting to Parliament Project – Phase 2: Moving Forward*, June 2000; available on-line at:
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/36/2/HAFF/Studies/Reports/haffrp037-e.html>.

(12) House of Commons, Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons, *Report*, June 2001; available on-line at:
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/37/1/SMIP/Studies/Reports/SMIP-E.htm>.

(13) House of Commons, Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, *Meaningful Scrutiny: Practical Improvements to the Estimates Process*, September 2003; available on-line at:
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=62292>.

Parliament's effectiveness and potential within the budgetary process also received detailed attention in a 2002 study sponsored by the Institute for Research on Public Policy.⁽¹⁴⁾ The authors – Peter Dobell and Martin Ulrich – argue that much remains to be done, that the role of parliamentary committees in reviewing estimates remains underdeveloped, and that committee assessments of the performance of programs in terms of results achieved is especially weak.

These findings reflect the reality that the substance of committee consideration of the estimates has not changed significantly, despite the reforms undertaken over the past three decades. Where committees devote time to the estimates at all, their efforts (with exceptions) have continued to reflect patterns that were well established before the recent reforms took place. Meetings on estimates during the previous Parliament continued to involve wide-ranging and relatively partisan exchanges over political priorities and the policy directions of departments, minimal attention to the substance of the estimates and, with certain notable exceptions, predictable votes in support of the estimates as proposed by the government. (See the Appendix for changes to the estimates made by committees during the 38th Parliament.)

POSSIBLE COMMITTEE STRATEGIES

The election of two successive minority governments has changed the political dynamics within committees and Parliament, and may open the door to genuinely innovative approaches to the estimates. A committee strategy for replacing traditional practices with more effective work on the estimates can benefit from two related approaches. These are: (1) identifying and fully exploiting the opportunities created by recent reforms, and (2) developing strategies to counter the pressures that deflect committees from meaningful work on estimates. The following section suggests concrete steps that may help committees to maximize their effectiveness in reviewing estimates.

(14) Peter Dobell and Martin Ulrich, "Parliament's Performance in the Budget Process: A Case Study," *Policy Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 5, Institute for Research on Public Policy, May 2002; available on-line at: <http://www.irpp.org/indexe.htm>.

A. Influencing Estimates

Recent changes to the format of reporting to Parliament do not alter the fact that reasons remain for political and administrative resistance to last-minute changes to estimates by Parliament, after they are presented in February of each year.⁽¹⁵⁾ However, the current reporting structure has been designed to create opportunities for parliamentary committees to affect the estimates in ways that are likely to minimize this resistance.

The existing cycle of reports to Parliament provides information about the plans and priorities reflected in upcoming estimates (spring), and about the departmental performance achieved through the expenditures authorized by Parliament in the previous year (fall). Each of these reports provides the committee to which it is referred with a potential subject of study, and an opportunity to make recommendations in advance of the finalization of estimates that are still under development within departments. The timing of the Departmental Performance Reports in the fall is particularly appropriate in this regard, because these are issued immediately in advance of the months when annual budgets are being prepared and the related estimates are being finalized.

It is noteworthy that reports focused on estimates that have not yet been placed before Parliament can address a wide range of policy and program issues that may, or may not, alter the dollar figures to be included in the Votes. For example, the reallocation of money within a program (compared with current-year allocations), or among programs included within the same Vote, might be proposed. As well, proposals for changes in the allocation of resources among Votes (compared with the current year) could be proposed at this stage, or more general changes to policy or administration that would entail changes to future estimates. While substantive comments of this kind are not permitted in reports on estimates, there is no procedural barrier to their inclusion in committee reports on Departmental Performance Reports or Reports on Plans and Priorities.⁽¹⁶⁾ In fact, committees are specifically empowered to issue reports upon the expenditure plans and priorities in future fiscal years of departments referred to them.⁽¹⁷⁾

(15) The presentation of the 2004-2005 Main Estimates to Parliament in October 2004 was an exception to this pattern, reflecting the timing of the 12 December 2003 government reorganization, which made it impossible to fully reflect changes in the Main Estimates presented to Parliament in February 2004.

(16) See Marleau and Montpetit (2000), p. 737.

(17) House of Commons, Standing Order 81(7).

Finally, the amending of the estimates, as proposed in February of each year, remains an option, along with the amending of supplementary estimates. To the extent that the reforms directed to improved reporting to Parliament have actually met their objectives, it can be argued that they provide parliamentary committees with a better basis for exercising their authority to recommend current-year changes than was available previously. The existence of Reports on Plans and Priorities separate from the main estimates would appear to open the door to committee reports on these documents that would, in effect, explain why an estimate was being rejected or amended, or state concerns (i.e., concerns about the allocation of money within a Vote). Such reports could be presented to the House and taken into account when the estimates as reported back by the committee are being considered. There may thus be a way to convey substantive recommendations to the House while respecting the existing procedure that precludes substantive statements within the formal report on the estimates.

Changes by committees to the estimates currently referred to them (rather than forward-looking recommendations concerning future-year estimates still under development) are more likely under a minority government. While such changes have been extremely rare under majority government conditions, the acceptance by the government (and the House) of a reduction of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's Main Estimates that was recommended by the Government Operations and Estimates Committee in 2003 indicates that such changes need not raise issues of confidence, when the government accepts them.⁽¹⁸⁾ However, the willingness of any government, minority or otherwise, to accept changes significantly affecting the delivery of existing policies or programs is likely to be limited. For this reason, even under minority government conditions, the potential role of committees in recommending changes to future-year estimates, rather than changes to estimates that are actually being considered by Parliament, remains important.

B. Enhancing Impact

As has been seen above, the formal authority of committees to recommend amended estimates does not necessarily give them the capacity to do this in practice, or ensure that recommendations are considered seriously by governments. This "real world" capacity

(18) See House of Commons, Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, *Third Report*, May 2003; available on-line at: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=37477>. For the vote in the House, see House of Commons, *Journals*, 12 June 2003, vote 205; available on-line at: http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/chambus/house/journals/117_2003-06-12/117votes-e.html.

relies on a range of political and institutional factors. Part of the practical challenge to committees involves the management of all the factors that can be shaped by committees, in order to create the basis for effective influence on estimates.

1. Credible Scrutiny

There are a number of possible strategies for enhancing the credibility, to ministers and Parliament, of committee studies of the estimates, and related reports. One of these is the expansion of hearings beyond the traditional one or two meetings devoted to estimates. This strategy acknowledges the level of technical complexity that is likely to be involved in adequately exploring the rationales behind existing spending estimates and the priorities they reflect, as well as evaluating alternative options. Extended hearings, involving expert witnesses (e.g., academics, retired senior officials) as well as departmental officials, would also strengthen the ability of committee members to deal with senior departmental officials who are, by virtue of their responsibilities, immersed in the administrative and technical issues that the estimates address.

A related scrutiny strategy involves maximum use of advisory resources available to Parliament. Officials of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) have frequently indicated their interest in providing committees with briefings on estimates and related support, in order to help them target issues to take up with departments or ministers, and devise the most effective ways of doing this. Panels enabling dialogue between departmental and OAG representatives might also be useful, if the parties could be persuaded to participate (officials on both sides have expressed reluctance about this in the past). Also, the OAG carefully considers requests from committees to conduct audits.

A complementary strategy would be to create a subcommittee on departmental estimates, which could provide a forum for ongoing work related to study of the estimates, and allow committee members with a special interest in estimates-related activities to work collaboratively in order to maximize effectiveness.

Finally, an information and analysis base could be developed in advance of formal hearings. One way of doing this would be to mandate committee staff (possibly in conjunction with a steering committee) to develop technical and administrative questions to be forwarded by the Chair to departments for response before meetings on the estimates. Committee members would thus have the benefit of technical advice from departments, which might also provide an improved basis for selecting issues suitable for exploring at the committee table.

2. Reduced Partisanship

As has been noted, meetings on the estimates frequently involve partisan exchanges that are not directly related to the content of the estimates or related reports. This tendency detracts from the credibility of both the proceedings and any recommendations resulting from them, and is widely deplored by parliamentarians themselves.

Levels of partisanship reflect a wide variety of factors and pressures external to the estimates process, and in some cases independent of the intentions of individual parliamentarians. However, there may be strategies that can help to counterbalance some of the pressures. First, a sequence of meetings or discussions with officials (departmental and otherwise) that lead up to an exchange between committee members and a minister may serve to focus that exchange more closely on the substance of the estimates. Or, conversely, meetings focused on technical discussion could follow the meeting at which the minister presents the estimates.

Second, the traditional role of the minister in defending the estimates prior to a committee decision concerning their disposition inevitably creates an adversarial dynamic between ministers and the committee (and opposition members in particular). There may be ways of altering this dynamic by, for example, formally endorsing the estimates at the beginning of a meeting with the minister (on the basis of previous discussions with officials). This might enable a more open-ended and future-oriented exploration of issues with the minister. Alternatively, some committees have considered estimates without the presence of the minister, which has the negative consequence of lowering the public and political profile of the committee's work, but also may remove an element of the partisan dynamic.

Where committees succeed in developing a relatively non-partisan culture relating to estimates, they may also be able to adopt practices that increase collective efficiency and effectiveness. The Valeri Report suggests that members can cope with the workload and paper burden associated with estimates, and also reduce the repetition of questions, by adopting a cross-party division of labour.⁽¹⁹⁾ This could allow issues or specific information sources such as Auditor General's reports, for example, to be assigned to individual members.

(19) House of Commons, Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, *Meaningful Scrutiny: Practical Improvements to the Estimates Process*, September 2003.

C. The Information Infrastructure

The renewed attention to reporting to Parliament in recent years recognizes the critical importance of the information provided to Parliament, as a basis for effective work by parliamentarians.

Reports on Plans and Priorities, and Departmental Performance Reports, are intended to support Parliament's capacity to hold governments accountable, providing clear statements of what departmental programs are achieving for Canadians (outcomes). However, partly because the technical challenges involved in developing performance indicators and outcome measures can be considerable, many of these reports do not consistently provide performance information, or financial information that would enable parliamentarians to assess the benefits of programs in relation to their costs. In staff-level consultations, Treasury Board officials have indicated that clear demands from Parliament are a key factor in giving them the leverage they need in order to ensure that estimates documents contain useful information. Critically reviewing the adequacy of the information provided is thus a potentially important function of parliamentary committees.

In conclusion, there is long-term as well as short-term work to be done by parliamentary committees on the estimates, contributing to the processes internal to government that provide the substantive information parliamentarians (and ministers) need. As in the past, the internal and the parliamentary processes of financial control are mutually reinforcing, and there is a role for parliamentary committees in fostering progress at both levels.

D. Reviewing a Program

The federal government and its departments have developed into large and complex organizations. In addition to a general, overall analysis of a department's estimates, priorities and performance, committees may want to engage in close scrutiny of one program during the estimates period, and potentially plan for a multi-year follow-up.

Some possible considerations in selecting a program for study are: risks to public health or safety, public interest, the amount of money involved, concerns about the management of the program, and opportunity for improvement.

The length and type of study could vary considerably. An overview of the information about a program provided in documents tabled in Parliament could be accomplished in one or two meetings, whereas an in-depth inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of a program could take ten or more meetings.

Since the information provided to Parliament is not always extensive, committees may wish to request internal planning and reporting documentation from the department regarding the program selected. While departments are often reluctant to release internal documentation, much of this information would not be covered by cabinet confidence and thus would be available through an access to information request.

A variety of different areas may be pursued in a program study, based on the committee's interest and time available.

1. Program Design

In order for a committee to determine whether or not a program is meeting its intended objectives, the program must be equipped with clear and concrete objectives. It must also have a performance measurement scheme to provide feedback to program managers, enabling them to provide evidence-based responses to questions from parliamentarians. Yet, these are often inadequate or even non-existent in many government programs.

It may also be asked, from a policy perspective, whether or not the right objectives have been identified for the program – e.g., whether those objectives reflect the needs that the program was intended to meet.

An important part of program design is the clear definition of roles and responsibilities, i.e., which organization will do what, as this will help prevent overlap and confusion. This is especially important for horizontal initiatives that cut across more than one sector or department.

2. Program Operation

Time considerations make it difficult for parliamentarians to examine how a program is operating in exhaustive detail. However, committees can examine how a program is being funded (through statutory authority, main or supplementary estimates), how that funding has changed, and whether or not the program requires more or less funding. They can also consider whether or not public funds are being spent efficiently and handled with probity and propriety.

Committees can also investigate whether a program is operating within its legislative framework (i.e., has not gradually crept beyond its mandate) and whether or not government-wide policies (e.g., evaluation, audit, money management, procurement) are being followed. In this regard, it should be noted that Treasury Board Secretariat often acts in an advisory capacity to departments, and does not enforce compliance with its policies.

3. Performance

Assuming clear performance goals have been set, committees may ask whether or not a program is achieving its intended objectives, i.e., whether it is effective at achieving what the government set out to do. They may also examine performance information collected by the department, if available. Citizen and client groups will often have clear, and sometimes divergent, views about whether or not a program is effective. Experts (e.g., academics, retired officials) can also provide the committee with recommendations for reasonable expectations for the performance of the program.

4. Reporting

In order for parliamentarians to understand the design, operation and performance of a program, there must be credible, timely, and balanced reporting. This reporting should clearly identify whether or not planned results have been achieved and provide explanations for any shortfalls. Yet, as noted earlier, the information provided to Parliament often does not do this. A detailed program study would be an ideal opportunity to provide departmental officials with clear expectations as to how the information available to Parliament, including financial information, should be improved.

5. Learning

While it is not realistic to expect error-free government, it is reasonable to expect that program managers should use performance information and the results of audits and evaluations to improve the design and delivery of programs.⁽²⁰⁾ However, many programs do not collect credible performance information or have periodic audits and evaluations. In addition to seeking specific evidence from program managers that they have learned from past experiences and responded with program improvements, committees could usefully explore the adequacy of the fact base compiled by departments, as a basis for learning.

6. Follow-up

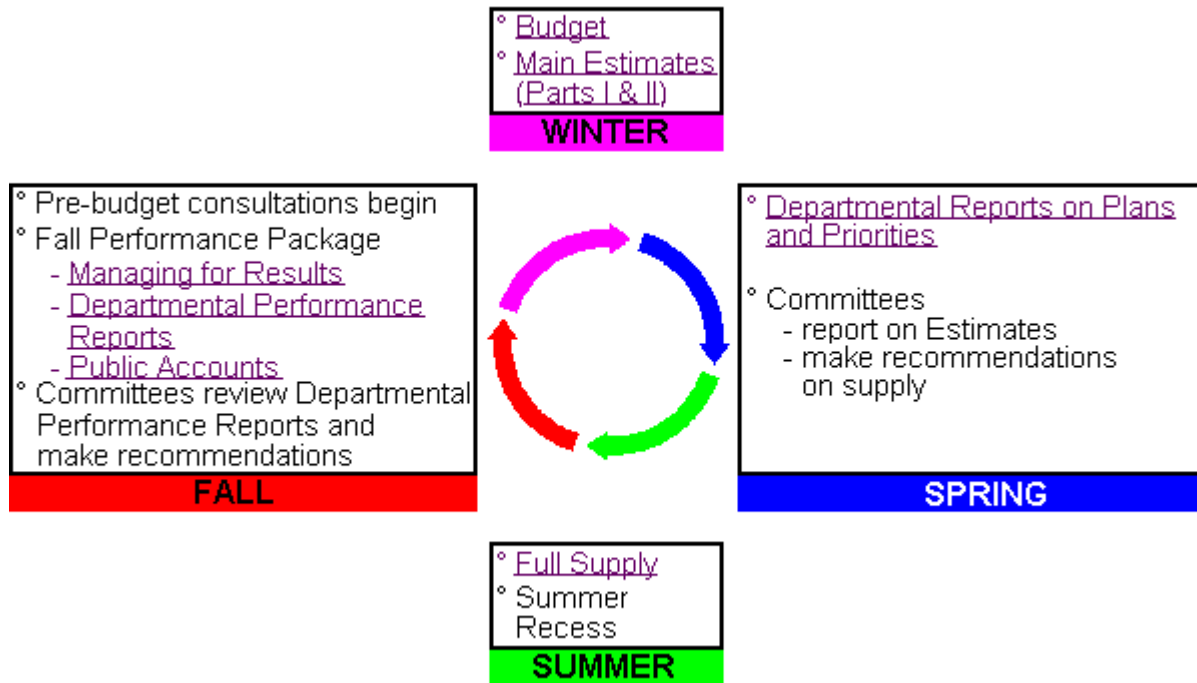
Since the late 1960s, committees' prevailing approach to departmental estimates has relied heavily on one-time events: one-time hearings with ministers and officials at which questions and requests for further information are frequently delivered one at a time by

(20) In addition to reports of the Auditor General, committees can consult internal audits and evaluations. Treasury Board Secretariat maintains a database at: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/database/aeve_e.asp.

individual members, and then all too frequently forgotten. Such events encourage departmental officials to view estimates hearings as a kind of annual hazing ritual, during which discomfort can be endured because it will be brief, and to pay limited attention to responsive action. Committees can counter this tendency by (a) formalizing demands in motions or report recommendations, and (b) rigorously following up, by providing staff (through motions or other public actions) with mandates to monitor departmental actions and report to committee members, and where necessary by holding follow-up hearings. Committees can also significantly strengthen their leverage with departments by selecting programs or activities for attention on a multi-year basis, which puts departmental officials on notice that they will be held accountable in the long term for responsiveness to committee recommendations.

APPENDIX

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING CYCLE⁽¹⁾



Note: Supplementary estimates and associated supply can occur several times during the year.

During the 38th Parliament (4 October 2004 – 29 November 2005), House of Commons standing committees presented 30 reports on the estimates.⁽²⁾ This number represented 11% of the 266 reports presented during the Parliament.

(1) Provided by Treasury Board Secretariat, 2002.

(2) House of Commons, "House of Commons Committees: Reports and Responses," <http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=381&JNT=0&SELID=e8&COM=0#8976>.

The breakdown of the 30 reports on the estimates was as follows:

Fiscal Year 2004-2005	
Main Estimates ⁽³⁾	8
Supplementary Estimates (A)	5
Supplementary Estimates (B)	3
Fiscal Year 2005-2006	
Main Estimates	10
Supplementary Estimates (A)	4

For the most part, House of Commons committees reported the estimates without changes. They did, however, reduce four specific amounts.

- On 29 November 2004, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates presented a report on the 2004-2005 Main Estimates in which it reduced the Vote under Governor General from \$16,684,000 to \$16,266,900 – a reduction of \$417,100 – and the Vote under Privy Council from \$111,358,000 to \$111,230,777 – a reduction of \$127,223.⁽⁴⁾ The Committee reduced the Governor General’s budget to show displeasure with a \$5-million circumpolar tour, and it reduced the Privy Council’s budget to protest the use of government money on a public opinion survey that the opposition considered partisan.⁽⁵⁾

The government tried to have the reductions overturned by the House of Commons, but was unsuccessful. On 9 December 2004, the government moved that the original amounts for the Governor General and the Privy Council be restored, but the motions were defeated. The House then voted to concur in the reduced amounts.⁽⁶⁾

- On 10 March 2005, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade presented a report on the 2004-2005 Supplementary Estimates (B) in which it reduced the amount for Foreign Affairs from \$12,011,400 to \$12,011,399 – a reduction of \$1.00. The reduction was to express displeasure with, among other things, the splitting of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.⁽⁷⁾ On 22 March, the House agreed to a government motion that the vote as reduced be concurred in.⁽⁸⁾

(3) The 2004-2005 Main Estimates were retabled in the fall of 2004.

(4) House of Commons, *Journals*, 29 November 2004, p. 269.

(5) Bill Curry, “Spending cuts for Governor-General, Privy Council,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 10 December 2004, p. A7.

(6) House of Commons, *Journals*, 9 December 2004, pp. 327-332.

(7) House of Commons, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Evidence*, 10 March 2005, pp. 14-15, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=125808>.

(8) House of Commons, *Journals*, 22 March 2005, p. 536.

- On 15 April 2005, the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development presented a report on the 2005-2006 Main Estimates in which it reduced the amount for the Privy Council from \$4,592,000 to \$4,552,000 – a reduction of \$40,000.⁽⁹⁾ The reduction was to protest the appointment of former Winnipeg mayor Glen Murray as chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and was roughly equivalent to his salary.⁽¹⁰⁾ In a previous report, the Committee had called on the Prime Minister to withdraw Mr. Murray’s appointment.⁽¹¹⁾ On 14 June, the House agreed to a government motion that the vote as reduced be concurred in.⁽¹²⁾

(9) *Ibid.*, 15 April 2005, p. 636.

(10) Bill Curry, “Opposition rejects salary for Martin appointee,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], 19 April 2005, p. A9.

(11) House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, *Fourth Report*, 38th Parliament, 1st Session, 22 March 2005.

(12) House of Commons, *Journals*, 14 June 2005, p. 888.