



THE FINANCIAL COST OF INTRODUCING A SUB-COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND OTHER CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

According to the document entitled “House of Commons Procedure and Practice”, available on the Canadian Parliament’s website, standing committees form the large majority of committees established by the House of Commons, and “...their titles and mandates cover every main area of federal government activity, but for a few exceptions.”ⁱ Subcommittees, on the other hand, “...are working groups that report to existing committees,”ⁱⁱ whose creation stems from a need/desire to “...relieve parliamentary committees of planning and administrative tasks, or to address important issues relating to their mandate.”ⁱⁱⁱ One of STAND’s core policy objectives concerns the recommendation to the government of Canada to create a sub-committee for the prevention of genocide and other crimes against humanity sitting under the Foreign Affairs committee (FAAE) – that is, a standing committee. Currently, FAAE is composed of two subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure (SFAA) and the Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR). Consequently, the creation of a Subcommittee on the Prevention of Genocide and other Crimes against Humanity would be relatively similar in structure and mandate to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR); however, such a subcommittee would ensure that potential acts of genocide and crimes against humanity – on a global scale – are under constant scrutiny. Undoubtedly, the creation of a Subcommittee on the Prevention of Genocide and other Crimes against Humanity would fulfill the purpose of a subcommittee as defined within the House of Commons Procedure and Practice: to address important (and specific) issues relating to their (i.e. the standing committee’s – in this case, FAAE’s) mandate.

When considering the various costs associated with both the initial creation and sustained operation of any form of subcommittee on Parliament Hill, many things must be taken into consideration, as there are a large number of both direct and hidden fees involved. The Annual Report of the Committees Directorate details the available budgets that are provided to individual standing committees. Unfortunately, the only budgets that are available are those of the standing committees, as these budgets account for the total available budget of each individual subcommittee working beneath the standing committee itself. The total budgets allotted to each individual standing committee are as follows^{iv}:

Committees	BUDGETS	EXPENDITURES					
		Reports	Contracts	Witnesses	Misc.	Travel	TOTAL
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	219,143	0	0	33,254	5,116	126,804	165,174
Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics	28,050	381	0	5,717	744	0	6,842
Agriculture and Agri-Food	224,774	510	0	80,395	7,910	15,419	104,234
Canadian Heritage	80,806	476	0	26,186	1,815	0	28,477
Citizenship and Immigration	97,274	505	0	28,749	611	525	30,390

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Environment and Sustainable Development	172,938	0	0	17,380	6,136	59,881	83,396
Finance	314,995	572	0	52,962	6,968	188,743	249,245
Fisheries and Oceans	86,960	397	0	20,891	341	13,627	35,256
Foreign Affairs and International Development	130,967	0	0	21,786	8,139	33,347	63,272
Government Operations and Estimates	11,450	0	0	2,204	1,120	1,175	4,498
Health	189,155	0	0	45,550	3,367	63,027	111,944
Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities	303,903	0	0	19,619	8,670	196,228	224,518
Industry, Science and Technology	94,338	828	0	18,723	3,785	2,057	25,392
International Trade	265,943	96	0	17,583	7,448	84,864	109,990
Justice and Human Rights	425,674	106	0	37,328	1,922	177,855	217,211
Liaison	5,676	0	0	0	1,786	0	1,786
National Defence	287,833	182	0	7,159	2,026	1,999	11,366
Natural Resources	160,400	116	0	36,731	446	8,249	45,542
Official Languages	48,259	180	0	20,676	516	300	21,672
Procedure and House Affairs	10,326	0	0	4,512	2,394	0	6,906
Public Accounts	34,419	0	0	0	4,331	4,594	8,925
Public Safety and National Security	463,555	321	0	17,283	8,620	232,496	258,720
Status of Women	62,956	951	0	15,728	5,112	5,246	27,038
Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	117,873	0	4,000	7,098	4,865	30,008	45,971
Veterans Affairs	122,786	88	0	11,056	1,190	24,524	36,859
SUB-TOTAL	3,960,452	5,709	4,000	548,570	95,378	1,270,968	1,924,623

I have highlighted the standing committee that is most applicable and relatable to the subcommittee proposed by STAND: FAAE. FAAE itself was granted a total annual budget of 130 967 dollars, of which only 63 272 dollars was spent during the 2009-2010 session. This means that of the \$130 967 available to FAAE, SDIR and SFAA, they only spent a combined \$63 272. Unfortunately, the precise amounts spent by each individual group is unavailable; however, according to Jeremy LeBlanc, Deputy Principal Clerk of the Committees Directorate, "...about \$21,000 of this \$63,272 was spent by SDIR and the balance was spent by FAAE."^v According to Mr. LeBlanc, SFAA does not have any expenses that come out of this budget. Thus, at a quick glance it appears that the annual cost of operating a subcommittee such as SDIR is approximately \$21 000.

This is complicated when one considers what is taken into account when calculating the amounts spent by FAAE (i.e. expenditures). The expenditures listed within the annual report include reports, contracts, witnesses, miscellaneous and travel. Predictably, the operation of both a standing committee and subcommittee would likely require far more expenses to be taken into consideration than these five categories alone. As a result, according to Julie Pelletier, the Clerk

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for SDIR, “...the spending listed in the annual report includes only part of a parliamentary committee’s operating costs. This is because only the amounts coming from the budgets approved by the liaison committee (witnesses, travel, reports, hospitality, etc.) are included.”^{vi} Predominantly, the bulk of the costs associated with the annual report are those costs “...required to reimburse witnesses who travel to appear before committees and to cover the costs when committees travel outside of Ottawa (which SDIR didn’t do last year, but FAAE did).”^{vii} To these costs must be added the salaries of employees who work for the committee directly (which would include, at minimum, a clerk, an administrative assistant, and a researcher whose primary duties are to support their respective committee/subcommittee^{viii}) alongside a portion of the salaries of others involved (a very important hidden cost, which can include, depending on the circumstances, the work of logistics officers, messengers, translators, interpreters, transcribers, editors, revisers, Web publishers, etc.). Moreover, administrative costs (“capital costs” according to Mr. LeBlanc) must be taken into consideration – an incredibly wide ranging category of costs that can include anything from photocopying, paper, computers, printers, binders, etc. to the offices within which the operations of the subcommittee take place. All of these costs lie outside the realm of those costs listed as expenditures within the annual report; therefore, the actual cost of operating a committee/subcommittee on Parliament Hill greatly exceeds the total listed within the report itself. Consequently, the total budget required for such a group’s creation and operation would similarly greatly exceed the total listed in the annual report. In other words, the aforementioned 130 967 would account for only a relatively small portion of the actual costs associated with the operations of both FAAE and SDIR. As stated by Julie Pelletier, “Committee and subcommittee costs are difficult to estimate, in particular because of all the people involved.”^x

The money required in order to support the various direct and hidden costs not considered in the annual report originates from a number of alternate budgets, including (but not limited to) the House of Commons Committees Directorate, the Library of Parliament Parliamentary Information and Research Service (both of which employ the large majority of individual committee/subcommittee staff members), and the Department of Public Works and Government Services (PWGSC).^x According to Mr. LeBlanc, the annual budget for the Committees Directorate alone is somewhere in the area of \$5 million, to support the work of all committees and subcommittees (and he suggested that the budget for the Library’s Research Service is in the same neighbourhood, although the Library is responsible for “...assisting House committees, Senate committees and parliamentary associations with that budget.”)^{xi} In addition to these two directorates – largely responsible for providing the necessary financial assistance required to pay those directly employed by individual committees/subcommittees – portions of the salaries of individuals indirectly involved with operations (such as those listed previously) are paid out of budgets for the House of Commons, the Library of Parliament, or the PWGSC. The capital costs for office equipment, furniture, software, etc. also come out of these budgets. Specifically, PWGSC leases office space for any and all operation of both the House and the Library “...and covers all of those associated costs.”^{xii}

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CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Due to the large variety of both direct and hidden costs associated with operating a subcommittee, it is impossible to develop a precise budget that would be required. According to Mr. LeBlanc, funding for both the House and Library – in similar fashion to government departments – is approved by Parliament through the Main Estimates.^{xiii} Unlike government departments, however, the funding is not subject to review by the Treasury Board and/or Cabinet, but is instead reviewed by either the Board of Internal Economy (in the case of the House of Commons budget) or the Speakers of the House and the Senate (in the case of the Library’s budget). Subsequently, “The Committees Directorate budget is part of the submission to the Board of Internal Economy and the Library’s research budget is part of the submission to the Speakers.”^{xiv} In total, the budget for the House of Commons administration is approximately \$175 million, while the budget for the Library of Parliament is approximately \$42 million. Mr. LeBlanc suggested that if there was a decision to create a new subcommittee, as we (STAND) propose, submissions would likely be made to both the Board of Internal Economy and to the Speakers for “...additional funds in order to hire additional staff to directly support such a new [sub]committee.”^{xv} Very likely there would not be a significant impact on the other services that are required in order to support all committees and other parliamentary functions because “...these are shared resources,”^{xvi} that primarily draw their funding from collective budgets. Thus, nearly all of those costs not listed within the annual report alongside those costs not involving the direct costs associated with operating such a subcommittee (that is, the salaries of those employed whose primary responsibility is to support the subcommittee – a clerk, administrative assistant and a researcher) represent shared resources, as they rely upon budgets that are meant to support the entire community of current standing committees and relevant subcommittees.

Although a precise hypothetical budget for one annual cycle cannot be easily devised, the direct and hidden costs associated with operating a subcommittee, such as the one proposed by STAND, can be easily listed.

DIRECT: Salaries of employees, Reports, Contracts, Witnesses, Travel

HIDDEN: Portions of “other” salaries, Administrative/Capital costs

Mr. LeBlanc stated that the starting salaries for employees directly associated with operating costs would be approximately \$40 000 for an administrative assistant, \$60 000 for a clerk and another \$70,000 for a researcher. Therefore, the direct costs of operating such a committee would be approximately \$200 000 (all salaries combined with the total expenditures of a subcommittee such as SDIR). While the total hidden costs are impossible to accurately predict, they would likely require a fairly substantial addition to the \$200 000; however, these hidden costs would be addressed by shared budgets/resources.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ "House of Commons Procedure and Practice. Second Edition." 2009. <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/procedure-book-livre/Document.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&sbdid=DC42FA65-ADAA-426C-8763-C9B4F52A1277&sbspid=085013AB-4B16-4B34-8E4C-A5B5C98818C9..>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} "2009-2010 Annual Report on Committee Activities and Expenditures." House of Commons Committees Directorate: June, 2010. P. 8. **[Included as separate attachment]**

^v LeBlanc, Jeremy. "Re: Request for Budgetary Information." Deputy Principal Clerk: Committees Directorate.

^{vi} Pelletier, Julie. "Re: Request for Budgetary Information." Clerk: Subcommittee on International Human Rights (SDIR).

^{vii} LeBlanc.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Pelletier.

^x LeBlanc.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Ibid.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid.

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