



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OTTAWA, CANADA

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**(February 2, 2004 - May 23, 2004)**

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## **Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

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### **List of Studies and Press Releases**

- Bill C-25, An Act to establish a procedure for the disclosure of wrongdoings in the public sector, including the protection of persons who disclose the wrongdoings
- Main Estimates 2004-2005: Vote 100 (Public Service Commission) under CANADIAN HERITAGE and Vote 40 (Office of the Information Commissioner) under JUSTICE
- **Study and Review of the Budget and Estimates of the Office of the Governor General**
- Study of the Office of the Associate Secretary to the Cabinet and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, and the Appointment of Robert A. Wright
- Supplementary Estimates (B) 2003-2004: Vote 110b under Canadian Heritage, Vote 1b under Governor General, Votes 40b and 45b under Justice, Vote 1b under Parliament, Votes 1b, 5b and 15b under Privy Council, Votes 1b and 15b under Public Works and Government Services and Votes 1b, 10b, 15b, 20b and 21b under Treasury Board
- Written question on the Order Paper (Question No. Q-72)

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#### **FROM THE RESEARCH BRANCH OF THE LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT**

Philippe Le Goff

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates has the honour to present its

### **SECOND REPORT**

## **The Governor General of Canada: Role, Duties and Funding for Activities**

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### ***Part I: Introduction***

This report presents the work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, which undertook a review of the budget and estimates of the Office of the Governor General, as well as the expenditures of the main departments and agencies supporting that Office, to determine whether its expenditures are consistent with the Governor General's mandate.

The Committee's initial interest in the budget of the Office of the Governor General stems from the significant growth in the expenditures of that Office in recent years. That interest was heightened by the reactions of many Canadians to the Governor General's State visit to a number of Nordic countries in September and October 2003. The Committee generally believes that the budgetary information provided to parliamentarians by the Office of the Governor General is incomplete, since a significant portion of the public funds necessary to the Governor General's activities and those of the Office are borne by other federal agencies and departments, without that fact being mentioned in the estimates of that Office. The Committee is also concerned by the fact that the Office of the Governor General is exempted from reporting to Parliament on its plans, priorities and performance. For these reasons, parliamentarians believe they are unable to make an adequate assessment of the quality of the management of public funds entrusted to the Office of the Governor General.

Having said that, the Committee also acknowledges the Canadian public's general lack of awareness of the Governor General's mandate, role and responsibilities and calls for a public debate on this institution, its future and its relevance in the context of an advanced democracy such as Canada.

[Part II](#) of this report offers an overview of the constitutional role and responsibilities of the Governor General of Canada.

[Part III](#) outlines changes in expenditures of the Office of the Governor General over the period from 1996-1997 to 2003-2004.

[Part IV](#) provides information on the support given to the Office of the Governor General by certain federal departments and agencies, together with details on the nature of services and level of financial support provided by each organization.

[Part V](#) contains the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

## ***Part II: Constitutional role and responsibilities of the Governor General of Canada***

Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. In theory, this means that Canadians recognize the Queen as their Head of State. In practice, however, the duties of Head of State are performed by the Governor General and the lieutenant-governors. When the Letters Patent<sup>1</sup> were registered in 1947, virtually all the responsibilities of the Head of State, also called royal prerogatives, were vested in the Governor General, despite the fact that a number of the Governor General's powers and responsibilities were already set out in the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

This status of Head of State is often put forward to justify the nature and scope of the Governor General's activities. Although the Governor General has vast legislative powers under the 1867 Constitution and the Letters Patent of 1947, many of the most important conventions in the Canadian Constitution provide that these powers are, in practice, exercised individually by the Prime Minister and collectively by Cabinet.

According to Andrew Heard<sup>2</sup>, these constitutional conventions prevent the Governor General from exercising the majority of these legal powers on his or her own initiative. They ensure that the vast legislative powers of the Sovereign's representative are maintained, even though the Governor General's field of activity is today defined primarily by Cabinet. The Governor General acts on the recommendations and at the request of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This aspect is critical in the context of the review of the Governor General's fiscal responsibility and accountability for the management of public funds allocated to him or her by Parliament.

### **1. Constitutional Role of the Governor General: Representing the Crown in Canada**

The Parliament of Canada consists of three parts: the Crown, represented by the Governor General, an appointed Senate and an elected House of Commons.

One of the Governor General's most important responsibilities is to ensure that Canada always has a Prime Minister. This responsibility may become critical when the party with the most members in the House of Commons forms a minority government.

In addition, the Governor General grants Royal Assent to bills passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, reads the Speech from the Throne, signs State documents, convenes the Houses, opens and closes the sessions of Parliament and dissolves Parliament when elections are called. He or she also presides over

hundreds of senior government officials.

## **The Role of Head of State**

As Head of State, the Governor General is responsible for representing Canada both in and outside the country.

Across Canada, the Governor General strives to promote national identity and Canadian unity and to enhance awareness of Canada's cultural wealth and diversity. He or she takes part in community activities, visits hospitals and schools, joins in the festivities at fairs and festivals, gives speeches and supports a wide range of organizations.

Internationally, the Governor General receives foreign dignitaries and heads of State at Rideau Hall. In accordance with the practice of reciprocity in international relations, the Governor General also entertains invitations to visit many countries on behalf of all Canadians. By accepting these invitations, the Governor General relies on existing international relations and acts in accordance with the recommendations of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The trip to Russia, Finland and Iceland in September and October 2003 took place in that context.

The Governor General is also Commander-in-Chief of Canada's Armed Forces. He or she encourages excellence and dedication in military personnel, visits Canadian Forces bases in all regions of the country, often welcomes troops on their return from overseas missions and performs other ceremonial duties.

Lastly, the Governor General awards honours to pay tribute to remarkable individuals in all fields of human activity. The Governor General awards various orders, decorations and medals.

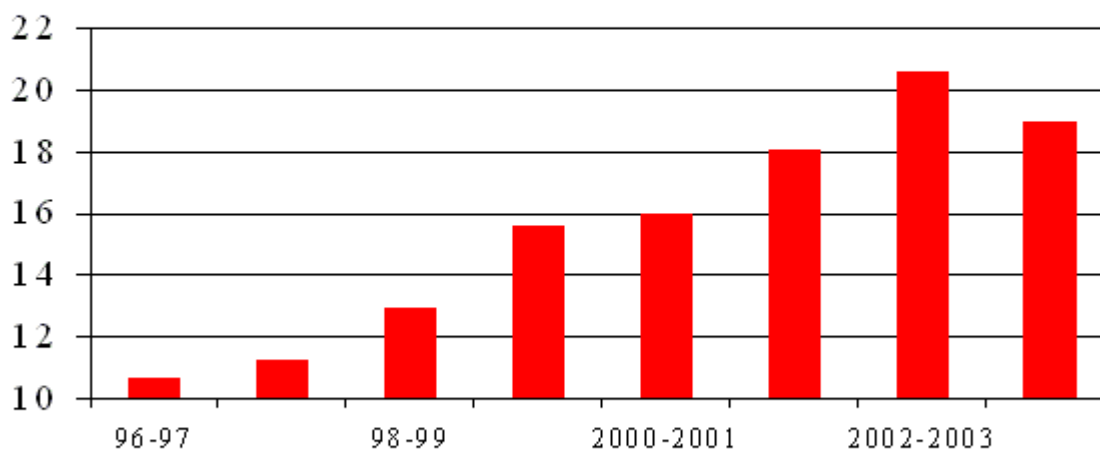
## ***Part III: Expenditures of the Office of the Governor General***

From 1996-1997 to 2003-2004, the budget of the Office of the Governor General jumped 78% from \$10.679 million to \$18.989 million, an average annual increase of 11.1%.

The federal government's program spending over the same period rose 29%, representing average annual growth of 4.1%.

According to the explanations provided by the Office of the Governor General, the \$8.3 million budget increase in recent years is mainly attributable to the visitors' program at Rideau Hall, the awarding of honours, upgrades to computer systems and renovations to ensure employees' health and safety on the Rideau Hall site.

## Estimates of the Office of the Governor General (millions of \$)



Source : Public Accounts of Canada and Treasury Board of Canada

### ***Part IV: Support From Federal Departments and Agencies for the Activities of the Governor General***

A certain number of federal departments and agencies support the activities of the Governor General and the Office to enable him or her to perform his or her duties. The level of support and services provided to the Office of the Governor General is determined by each of the contributors and funded out of the budgets of those organizations. The various contributing departments and agencies are responsible for allocating and managing the funds they provide to support the activities of the Governor General and the Office and are subject to Treasury Board guidelines. The amounts spent by the departments and agencies in question do not appear in the accounts of the Office of the Governor General. On March 11, 2004, six<sup>3</sup> federal departments and agencies testified before the Committee to explain in detail how they contributed to the activities of the Governor General and the Office. That meeting also afforded an opportunity to clarify the financial support provided by each department and agency in recent years.

#### **1. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)**

The primary role the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade plays with respect to the Governor General is to support the Office in the organization of visits to Canada by foreign heads of State and visits by the Governor General to other countries. Second, DFAIT advises the Governor General on foreign policy. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs regularly informs the Governor General on foreign policy issues of particular importance for Canada. DFAIT also provides the Governor General with documentation to assist in relations with Canada's diplomatic corps and in the meetings he or she holds with foreign dignitaries. This includes the support work done for the presentation of credentials of new ambassadors to Canada.

In the process of organizing State visits abroad, the Department of Foreign Affairs, in close consultation with the Office of the Governor General and the Privy Council Office, recommends State visits that the Governor

the basis of those recommendations. The Prime Minister then asks the Governor General to conduct a given visit. The Department of Foreign Affairs assists the Office of the Governor General in planning and organizing the visit. As part of the process of planning a State visit, DFAIT's Chief of Protocol establishes and chairs a working group that brings together various stakeholders responsible for preparing the visit. That group consists of representatives of the Office of the Governor General, the Privy Council Office, DFAIT and other departments, as needs dictate. The actual organization and coordination of the visit program is channelled through this working group

Through the Office of the Governor General, the working group makes recommendations to the Governor General on the program. The final decision on the program of the visit rests with the Governor General. The coordination of the overall program and logistics for State visits abroad is done by the Office of the Chief of Protocol at DFAIT, in collaboration with other federal departments. In this way, the Department of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with other stakeholders, organized some 19 official visits to Canada and visits to 10 countries by our governors general from 1999 to 2003. The number of these visits varies from year to year, depending on foreign policy priorities. The decision to make the visits is based on a number of factors, including the issue of reciprocity with other heads of State.

The financial arrangement designed to cover the costs of the Governor General's trips abroad is made by the Office of the Chief of Protocol, who develops a cost-sharing formula that may include contributions from the geographic, cultural and trade branches of the Department of Foreign Affairs and other departments and agencies such as National Defence, the RCMP and the Office of the Governor General itself. Since each State visit of the Governor General is unique, the cost-sharing formula will vary.

For the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the financial contribution the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade made to the Office of the Governor General totalled \$5 million for State visits abroad. The Department does not contribute to the expenses of the Office of the Governor General in the case of State visits to Canada by foreign dignitaries.

## **2. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**

As Canada's national police force, the RCMP is responsible at all times for the personal protection of the Governor General, his or her family and the residences, including Rideau Hall. The RCMP has had that responsibility since 1970. The Governor General is accompanied by the RCMP when travelling outside the country. It should also be noted that the RCMP conducts advance visits to countries the Governor General will travel to in order to make contact with local authorities and ensure that Canadian security standards are met.

The RCMP allocates approximately \$3.5 million a year for the protection of the Governor General. The bulk of that cost consists of the salaries of RCMP officers and members of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires assigned to personal and property security at Rideau Hall.

## **3. National Defence**

As their Commander-in-Chief, the Governor General has an important symbolic and ceremonial relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces. He or she plays a very active and visible role in the lives of Canadian Forces members by presenting deserving personnel with orders, decorations and medals, such as the Order of Military Merit, the Distinguished Service Decorations, Decorations for Bravery and Service Medals.

In that context, the Canadian Forces support the Governor General's activities in a number of ways:

- The Canadian Forces provide air transportation services and logistical support when the Governor General travels both in and outside Canada. From September 30, 2002 to September 30, 2003, the Governor General made 55 trips by Challenger (CC-144) and one by Airbus (CC-50).
- The Canadian Forces assign to the Governor General at least three aides-de-camp, who are junior officers of the captain or navy lieutenant level, from all three services. The position of Director of Program Implementation and Security is also held by a naval captain, or colonel equivalent.
- The Governor General also enjoys the services of a photographer at the sergeant level.

- Other personnel, such as doctors and logisticians, are occasionally assigned to provide special services to the Governor General from time to time or on a short-term basis, such as during State visits abroad.

The Canadian Forces also perform ceremonial functions, providing honour guards and gun salutes at major State occasions such as the opening of Parliament and the arrival of visiting heads of State. In the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the Canadian Forces provided support to the Office of the Governor General in the amount of \$2.4 million.

#### **4. National Capital Commission (NCC)**

The National Capital Commission is the agency responsible for the preservation and maintenance of the six official residences located in the National Capital Region, including Rideau Hall. Of the six, Rideau Hall is the most significant in terms of the history of its buildings and grounds, and the most expensive in terms of its size and complexity. It is also the only official residence open to the public, with tens of thousands of Canadian and international visitors each year. In addition, Rideau Hall houses the official offices and staff of the Governor General.

In order to carry out its responsibilities, the NCC has a budget envelope estimated at \$4.516 million for 2003-2004, enabling it to cover personnel, operations and maintenance costs. The NCC also manages a capital budget of \$5.371 million for Rideau Hall in 2003-2004.

Since the NCC became responsible for the official residences in 1988, capital requirements have always been funded from a separate budget allocation from Treasury Board. The funding received is for a multi-year capital works program covered by the NCC's board of directors and based on the need to ensure the safety and security of buildings and grounds, their life cycle renewal and heritage preservation, as well as to ensure the health and safety of the residents, their families, staff and visitors.

For the period from 1987 to 1999, the NCC received \$25.8 million in capital funding for all the official residences. In 1999, Treasury Board approved partial funding of \$31.35 million for a six-year period, and the NCC, in 2003, received authority to redirect a further \$5.5 million to fund health and safety repairs at the official residences during 2003-2004.

The NCC works with the Office of the Governor General and consults the Governor General on the nature of projects planned by the NCC, their timing and their impact.

#### **5. Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC)**

Public Works and Government Services Canada, on behalf of the Office of the Governor General, is responsible for the primary costs associated with La Citadelle, the Governor General's residence in Quebec City, and De LaSalle Academy in Ottawa, which houses the Chancellery.

In 2002-2003, total expenses incurred in support of La Citadelle totalled \$913,000, which included operating costs, renovations and maintenance as well as payments in lieu of taxes and utilities.

Between 1999-2000 and 2002-2003, overall costs in respect of La Citadelle rose 76.9% from \$515,919 to \$912,617. Total costs relating to La Citadelle should reach more than \$1 million in 2004-2005. That increase is attributable to inflation and the decision to open La Citadelle to the public. Repair costs have also risen as a result of the need to modernize, replace and repair certain parts of the building. Amounts spent on La Citadelle include an annual contribution of \$75,000 paid by Public Works and Government Services Canada to the Canadiana Fund<sup>4</sup> and \$50,000 reserved for the acquisition of furniture, art and other items for La Citadelle. Those items are part of PWGSC's collection.

#### **6. Canadian Heritage**

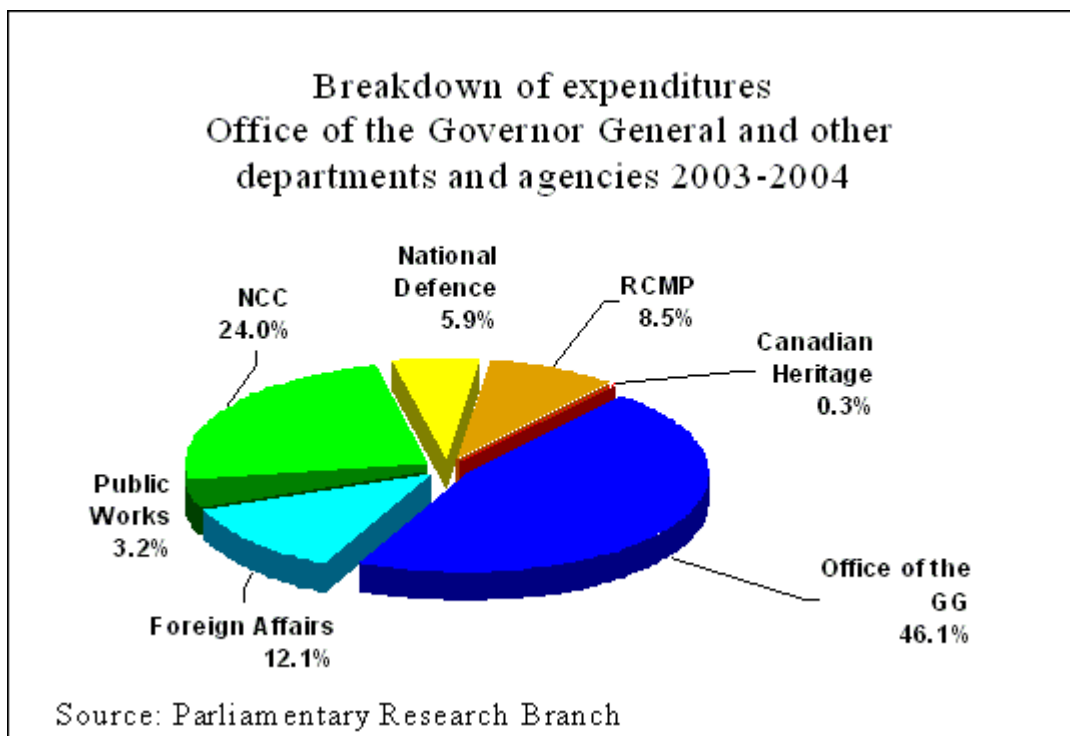
The Department of Canadian Heritage provides assistance and support to the Governor General and the Office through its role in State ceremonies and royal visits. That support sometimes extends to covering the costs incurred by the lieutenant-governors in performing functions of the Governor General in connection, for example, with the Caring Canadian Awards.

When foreign dignitaries visit Canada, Canadian Heritage provides official gifts for them. This service is provided to the Governor General, but also to all ministers of the Crown.

Canadian Heritage also plays a leading role in special celebrations, as was the case of Her Majesty the Queen's Jubilee. On that occasion, the Department provided special assistance to Rideau Hall with the Jubilee Medals Program, and financial support was allocated to the Office of the Governor General.

Canadian Heritage is also responsible for the installation of new governors general. During the period prior to installation, future governors general are provided with office space and professional support. Canadian Heritage covers expenses for those items as well as for related official ceremonies and receptions.

Lastly, Canadian Heritage is also responsible for the burial of former governors general. State funerals are among their functions. For the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the expenses incurred by the Department of Canadian Heritage in respect of the Governor General should reach \$113,000.



## ***Part V: Conclusions and Recommendations***

The Committee's review of the budget and estimates of the Office of the Governor General has led to a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Governor General and the Office. The Committee's work shed light on changes in funding that Canadians make available to that institution and clarified the contributions and roles of the federal government departments and agencies that support its activities. In the course of the review, some Committee members wondered what the mandate of the Governor General of Canada should be. Others questioned the very relevance of the Governor General of Canada.

Notwithstanding this, the Committee agreed that it should be clear how much it costs the taxpayer each year

Before answering those questions, however, the Committee believes that Canadians should first learn more about the mandate, role and responsibilities of the Governor General as an institution. In the short term, the Committee suggests that the Office of the Governor General could demonstrate greater transparency with regard to the public funds entrusted to it. Consequently, the Committee recommends:

1. That the Parliament of Canada take the necessary measures to conduct a review and initiate a debate on the mandate, constitutional role, responsibilities, and future evolution of the Office of the Governor General of Canada (the Head of State) in which all Canadians be included.
2. That the Parliament of Canada conduct a review of the process for selecting and appointing the Governor General (Head of State) of Canada.
3. That the Parliament of Canada ensure that the necessary measures are taken to improve the financial transparency and accountability of the Office of the Governor General (Head of State).
4. That the Parliament of Canada consider whether it should terminate the constitutional exemption of the Governor General (Head of State) from reporting to Parliament.
5. That the Office of the Governor General report on its annual projected plans and priorities and the anticipated results of its activities. In that report, the Office of the Governor General should state the expenses borne by the federal departments and agencies supporting its activities.
6. That the Office of the Governor General prepare an annual report on its activities, including its financial statements, and that that report be available on its Web site. The report could be based on that of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General of Australia (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report within one hundred and fifty (150) days.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meeting Nos. 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Szabo  
*Chair*

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<sup>1</sup> In 1947, the Letters Patent defining the authority of the Governor General expressly authorized the Governor General to exercise all the prerogatives, powers and authorities that His Majesty George VI held as King of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Heard, *Canadian Constitutional Conventions: The Marriage of Law and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, National Defence, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Department of Public Works and Government Services, National Capital Commission and Department of Canadian Heritage.

<sup>4</sup> The Canadiana Fund was established to enhance the beauty of and interest in the State areas of Canada's official residences through donations of the finest examples of historical furnishings, paintings and objets d'art or the funds needed to purchase them.

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