

Point of Order

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 116 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 116—**Mr. Boudria:**

With respect to the calculation of costs for answering *Order Paper* questions, (a) what was the cost of the calculation (b) who devised the plan for the calculation (c) how much did it cost to devise the plan for the calculation?

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): As Government House Leader, the Minister has full responsibility for the ordering of government business in the House of Commons. Included in this overall responsibility are the supervision of replies to written questions and the process involved in replying to such questions.

In 1975, the then Leader of the Government in the House of Commons requested that, for a period of six weeks, the cost of answering questions be provided to estimate the cost of producing government information through the parliamentary system.

The cost accounting system used (logging of time spent and salary of each individual) proved to be time consuming, unreliable and created delays in the process of answering questions as it was too elaborate and personal. The study produced an average cost of \$60 per respondent. Some questions may have up to 120 respondents (all Departments, Agencies and Crown Corporations).

With the result, the government could estimate the approximate cost of producing government information for a Session or any period of time.

Ex.: 275 questions assigned to 625 Departments, Agencies and Crown Corporations
625 respondents X \$60. = \$37,500
(1975 cost)

Since then, only *rough estimates* have been released:

1979—\$100. per respondent
1981—\$125. per respondent
1986—\$175. per respondent

Last spring, the Parliamentary Returns Division (PRD) of the Office of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was requested to set up a cost accounting system to identify time consuming questions

and determine their cost while minimizing the time and cost of the exercise.

Based on the 1975 experience, it was decided that respondents would only provide the approximate total number of hours/minutes spent to prepare each response. The total number of hours/minutes includes the approximate time spent on all preparation steps i.e.: assignment, research, preparation, editing, coordinating, typing, computer time, review, translation, approval, printing, etc.

The cost of answering is arrived by multiplying the total number of hours/minutes by the average hourly rate of the Public Service plus printing cost, if voluminous. The time to calculate the cost of answering a question takes only a few seconds.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The question as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary has been answered.

Mr. Cooper: I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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POINT OF ORDER

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I plan on being very brief but I would like to ask the Speaker to investigate something for me.

Earlier we heard the concerns raised by the Bloc Québécois about the activities of members of Parliament relating specifically to a committee. I saw a demonstra-