

Organization of the General and Financial Administration of the House of Commons

The lack of plans, policies, documented procedures and adequate reports, coupled with the growth of expenditures to \$84 million and a requirement to improve significantly the co-ordination of all administrative functions of the House, led us to place before you at our meeting of October 4 the following two key recommendations:

- Establish the position of Administrator to co-ordinate and direct the administrative functions of the House of Commons. The Administrator should be of equivalent rank to a deputy minister and should report directly to the Speaker of the House of Commons.
- Establish the position of Comptroller of the House of Commons to develop, co-ordinate and maintain all activities relating to accounting and financial administration and controls of the House of Commons and its members. The Comptroller should report directly to the Administrator.

It should be emphasized here that we understand the respect with which members regard the traditional relationships between the Speaker, the Clerk, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the House of Commons. We also accept your admonition that any final description of responsibilities of such an Administrator, including relationships with existing officers of Parliament, must come only after members have had a proper opportunity for study and comment.

At the same time, it is our earnest recommendation that the actual work of the Administrator begin as soon as possible, and that the Administrator work together with the Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms as a Management Committee. In this latter regard, we are encouraged by your view that such a Management Committee would constitute a very natural continuation of regular consultations which took place during the last Parliament and that you would not only support such a concept, but would serve as chairman. In the light of your other responsibilities, this is more than we had intended to suggest, but it certainly in our opinion constitutes the best possible arrangement.

We feel that the interim solution which concludes this letter accommodates the need for both comment and expediency and so, in conjunction with that proposal, we have appended capsule position descriptions, outlining the principal responsibilities and relationships respecting these two positions, together with an illustrative, functional chart of organization. The chart illustrates the proposed separation between professional (chamber and procedural) activities and administrative functions. We believe that the direction of the administrative services of the House is a complex and full-time job, and that there is an immediate need to:

- oversee the development and implementation of effective financial, personnel and operating practices;
- establish performance indicators, and cost and reporting mechanisms to provide for accountability; and
- create a co-ordinated and integrated administrative organization.

The chart of organization identifies a number of responsibilities now assigned to the Sergeant-at-Arms that we feel should be directed eventually by the Administrator. These

responsibilities, including the Parliamentary Restaurant and cafeterias, building maintenance and cleaning, and messenger services, are highlighted by footnote 1 in the accompanying chart. The rationale for these proposed changes in responsibilities stems from our view that they are more clearly aligned with the role of the Administrator in ensuring economy and efficiency. In the period of transition, close co-ordination would be required between the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Administrator to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities.

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You indicated the desirability of proceeding with all reasonable dispatch to fill the two key positions, with first priority being given to the position of Administrator, and asked me to assist you in this connection. Appreciating the need to proceed promptly, but recognizing also that identifying suitable candidates for such a unique and important position as that of Administrator of the House of Commons would likely require several months, I proposed a possible interim arrangement. Briefly, I suggested that, if you so desired, arrangements could be made for the Senior Deputy Auditor General, Mr. Rhéal Chatelain, F.C.A., to assume, on an interim and acting basis, the responsibilities of Administrator, through secondment to the House of Commons reporting directly to you. It seemed that Mr. Chatelain's background and experience is particularly relevant in helping to set up the position of Administrator. Prior to returning to Ottawa from Quebec City in 1974 to accept his present position, Mr. Chatelain held several senior positions with the Government of Quebec, having been successively Comptroller of the Treasury, Comptroller of Finance and Deputy Minister of the Civil Service Department.

You responded positively to this suggestion, and on October 18 you convened a meeting attended by yourself, Dr. Koester, the Clerk of the House of Commons, General Cloutier, the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Chatelain, two of my other associates, and myself. At this meeting the proposed arrangement was discussed and it was agreed that it was a practical and workable arrangement which should be proceeded with as soon as possible. Tentatively, November 19 was selected as the date on which Mr. Chatelain could commence this special temporary assignment.

In accordance with your suggestion it was agreed that, in due time, I would initiate enquiries through the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission to identify for your consideration potential candidates for the position of Administrator.

It was further agreed that I would provide you with this letter to place on record the substance of the principal matters covered in our several discussions.

We are proceeding with other phases of the comprehensive audit and will be directing our attention next to the personnel management aspects of the administration.

My colleagues and I appreciate this opportunity to be of service to the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,

J. J. Macdonell
Auditor General of Canada