



October 2, 2020

**Re: Information Request IR0542**

Further to the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's Information Request, dated September 24, 2020, the Translation Bureau is pleased to provide a breakdown of the incremental costs incurred to date in providing virtual interpretation services for Parliament during the pandemic.

***Costs of the staffing process, compensation of additional interpreters hired, or any other cost related to the increased number of interpreters available during remote parliamentary meetings and the shortened duration of interpreters' virtual assignments to ensure that they have time to rest.***

No additional interpreters were hired as a result of the pandemic or remote parliament demand. As of mid-March 2020, clients cancelled all interpretation requests other than the PM press conferences and select committees for both the House of Commons and Senate, which increased over time. Although the provision of interpretation services in a virtual setting requires more resources per assignment (25% in average), the significantly reduced business volume allowed the Translation Bureau to reallocate resources without incurring additional costs.

In addition to on-staff interpreters, the Bureau spends approximately \$1.6M annually in contracts for freelance interpreters serving Parliament. From April 2020 to the end of August 2020 the total value of contracts was \$727K compared to \$792K for the same period in 2019.

***Cost of the research project aimed at addressing the mental workload and fatigue that interpreters are experiencing during remote interpretation.***

Prior to the pandemic, the Translation Bureau was exploring the impact of remote interpretation and mandated the University of Geneva to research the cognitive load and fatigue and the National Research Council (NRC) to gather and analyze empirical data on sound quality related to virtual interpretation assignment. The research projects are valued at \$147K (\$108K and \$39K respectively) and both were initiated prior to the pandemic. The contract with the University of Geneva is in effect from September 1, 2020 to March 1, 2022. To date, \$16,000 has been incurred. Preliminary findings are expected in September 2021 and final results in March 2022. The Interdepartmental Agreement with NRC is valid until March 31, 2021, an amount of \$10,900 has been incurred to date.

***Cost of any audio device purchased to improve sound quality, or any other cost related to providing remote interpretation during the pandemic.***

The Translation Bureau purchased various remote interpretation equipment to gather experience and information, and to provide guidance to clients to improve the quality of remote interpretation services. The cost is \$2,780, and a detailed breakdown of said costs is attached hereto as **Schedule "A"**.

***Any forecast of these costs that you might have prepared for the coming weeks/months/quarters. If calculated costs are unavailable, please include the number of additional interpreters hired, their average compensation, and the number of monthly hours of overtime.***

For the time being, the Translation Bureau does not anticipate interpretation requests to return to pre-pandemic levels in the next few months and as such, can manage within the allocated budget.

We trust you will find the above to be satisfactory and invite you to contact the undersigned should you have any additional questions or concerns regarding the above.

Regards,

Lucie Séguin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Translation Bureau