



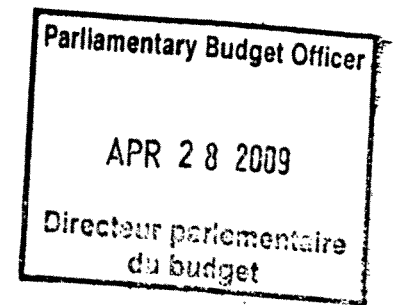
Department of Finance
Canada

Ministère des Finances
Canada

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0G5



APR 28 2009

Mr. Kevin Page
Parliamentary Budget Officer
Library of Parliament
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A9

Dear Mr. Page:

I am writing with reference to the letter you sent to Mr. Ted Menzies, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, on March 26, 2009 which he has forwarded to me. I would like to clarify a number of issues you have raised in that letter, in other correspondence and in public statements regarding access to data from the Department of Finance.

The first data request (PBO Information Request 001) submitted by you to the Department of Finance by letter on December 1, 2008 covered the detailed national accounts variables underlying the projections in the November 2008 Economic and Fiscal Statement. In our December 24, 2008 response, we indicated that we were consulting with the Privy Council Office on whether the information you requested represented a confidence of Cabinet. I note that you made a similar request (PBO Information Request 005) on February 24, 2009 for the information underlying the Budget 2009 projections.

Subsequent to our December 24, 2008 response, we received confirmation that the information you requested represents a confidence of Cabinet. This was a determination that was made by the Privy Council Office, which is responsible for determining what is and is not a Cabinet confidence. Given this determination, the Department of Finance cannot provide you with this information.

You have indicated that you disagree with this opinion. As evidence, you have stated that the information you are seeking is routinely shared with the Bank of Canada and representatives of the OECD.

Canada

This is incorrect. My officials have confirmed that we do not share the detailed forecasts underlying budgets or economic and fiscal updates with any such parties.

We do share certain elements of the internal views of Departmental officials on the economy with the Bank of Canada and the OECD. These exchanges are based on the internal forecasts of the Department of Finance, not the budget forecast, which is derived from private sector economic forecasts.

The information shared with the Bank of Canada and the OECD is provided on a confidential basis in the interest of furthering collective understanding of economic developments, prospects, and risks. Moreover, the information sharing in these discussions is at a general level, and it does not go into the level of detail you outlined in requests 001 and 005. We are open to sharing the same information with you that we share with the Bank of Canada and the OECD on the same terms that apply in those situations, including maintaining the confidentiality of the information.

On December 3, 2008 you submitted a request (PBO Information Request 002) to the Department of Finance by letter asking for data related to the Spending Restraint Exercise, the Strategic Review Exercise and the Corporate Asset Management Review. My December 24, 2008 letter to you also provided the Department's response to this request. This included setting out relevant tables in the Public Accounts which provide a comprehensive list of government assets that would be eligible for divestiture.

On February 23, 2009 you sent a letter to the Department of Finance in response to my December 24, 2008 letter. Your February 23 letter suggests that you considered our response to request 002 incomplete with regard to the details underpinning estimates of revenues from asset sales to be achieved under the Corporate Asset Review process. Your letter notes that the intent of the request was to inform parliamentarians as to the nature of the specific assets the government is planning to sell. The Government has been very clear that the identification of potential assets for divestiture is part of a process that is ongoing, and that the Government will report on progress in due course.

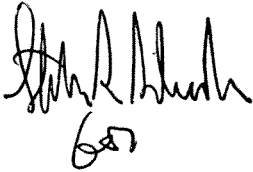
You also indicate in your February 23 letter that in previous budgets, when proposed savings and revenues associated with certain reviews have been included, such details underlying the proposed savings and revenues were made available in the budget document. I would note that there are a number of instances in the past where the Government recorded savings from spending reviews and planned asset sales before results of these reviews were finalized. For example, in Budget 2003, the Government announced that it would reallocate \$1 billion per year from existing spending programs, beginning in

2003-04. Although the review was just in the process of being launched, expected savings from the review were recorded in the fiscal projections of the budget. Similarly, in Budget 2004, the Government recorded expected net revenues of \$2 billion from the planned sale of its remaining shares in Petro-Canada well before the sale took place.

Finally, your February 23 letter also expanded on request 001 by seeking a corresponding National Accounts-Public Accounts reconciliation of the fiscal projections. You note two previous instances in which such reconciliations were generated and published in the Government's Economic and Fiscal Update. Such reconciliations are not currently produced by the Department of Finance. They were prepared at a time when the Government based its fiscal projections on private sector fiscal projections.

On Tuesday, March 23, 2009 I met with you and reiterated that the Department of Finance is committed to ensuring you receive the fullest cooperation possible from the Department in obtaining access to data to which you are entitled under the law. My staff and I are committed to working with you and your staff to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Wright', with a small flourish underneath.

Rob Wright

c.c. Ted Menzies, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance