



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

MARTHA HALL FINDLAY
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT / DÉPUTÉE
WILLOWDALE

May 8, 2009

Sharon Carstairs, Senator and Joint Chair
Peter Goldring, MP and Joint Chair
Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament

c/o Committees Directorate
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

RE: Parliamentary Budget Officer (the "PBO")

Dear Colleagues:

Please accept this letter for your consideration as part of your deliberations with respect to the PBO. I write to you, both as a concerned Canadian citizen and as an elected parliamentarian, to express my belief in the importance of the institution of the PBO and the principles of transparency and accountability on which that institution was founded. I also write to express my sincere belief that the PBO should function independently so as to ensure that its initiatives remain credible in the eyes of the Canadian populace that we all serve.

The principles of transparency and accountability in government are fundamental to our democracy. The existence of highly capable, highly skilled and independent entities like the PBO help to ensure that our elected governments, of whatever party, are always subject to the scrutiny of the people who elected them. To this end, the very existence of a properly functioning, properly funded and properly qualified PBO ensures that information relating to budgetary initiatives, often cloaked in political rhetoric and otherwise unavailable to Canadians, is analyzed and released by concerned and unbiased professionals. Furthermore, the existence of a functional and qualified PBO provides Canadians with access to a trustworthy, capable and independent analysis of the effectiveness of announced budgetary initiatives both before and during the time in which those initiatives are implemented.

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The independent office of the Auditor General is critical in this regard to government spending, but in review and analysis after the fact. A similarly qualified, adequately resourced and independent PBO is critical in similar way, but in real-time budgetary and spending analysis.

I strongly believe that, in order to appropriately provide the service that it is capable of providing, the PBO must remain independent and properly resourced. Independence would require that the PBO be accountable to Parliament and function within the parameters of its enabling statutes, while remaining uninfluenced by other governmental or political institutions. In order to successfully maintain its independence and to remain effective, I submit that the PBO must (i) be allowed to operate within the reasonable budget that it was promised upon its creation; and (ii) be free to hire its own staff of competent professionals thereby eliminating the possibility of biased appointments.

If government takes the required steps to ensure that the PBO is financially viable and politically independent, the PBO can and will be a significant pillar supporting a strong regime of Canadian governmental transparency and accountability. In so doing, it will also serve to maintain the integrity of our democracy.

Thank you,

Martha Hall Findlay

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