



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **TRAVEL EXPENDITURES RELATED TO THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SECRETARY SINCE 2014**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

**Kelly McCauley, Chair**

**OCTOBER 2023  
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES**

has the honour to present its

## **ELEVENTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied travel expenditures related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary since 2014 and has agreed to report the following:



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## SUMMARY

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Following Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon's official working visit to the Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait) from 17 to 23 March 2022, a House of Commons sessional paper revealed that the cost of catering services for related flights was over \$80,000. Pursuant to two related motions passed 13 June 2022 and 6 October 2022, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates studied selected travel expenses of the current and previous two governors general. During its studies, it heard from six federal officials about the working visit to the Middle East. It also received written documentation, including invoices and other financial information on official travel from five federal organizations.

This report outlines the structure of federal support for the governor general and describes the costs of the March 2022 working visit to the Middle East. It then compares Governor General Simon's travel costs for her first year in office with the travel costs of the two previous governors general in selected years. Next, it provides an overview of federal efforts to reduce travel costs. The report concludes by offering the committee's observations and recommendations.



# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

## **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada take steps to improve coordination and oversight on decisions related to Very Very Important Person (VVIP) travel, such as, but not limited to:**

- **increasing planning lead time;**
- **ensuring cohesive inter-departmental planning for such trips, particularly developing a trip plan and examining the logistics early in the planning phase;**
- **monitoring and validating cost during the execution phase; and**
- **sharing best practices and lessons learned with respect to planning and oversight of VVIP travel among all offices that deal with VVIP travel, both international and domestic. .... 24**

## **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada review the practice of VVIP international travel with the goal of ensuring good value for money to further key government priorities and objectives. .... 24**

## **Recommendation 3**

**That catering costs and other cost-influencing factors, such as availability of multiple catering providers, handling services, or possible partnerships with Canadian airlines on catering and handling, be factored into the choice of airport and travel location whenever feasible, and that locations with unionized work environments be selected whenever possible. .... 24**

**Recommendation 4**

**That federal organizations supporting the governor general regularly examine the cost-effectiveness of travel, without affecting operational effectiveness, by:**

- **reducing the overall size of delegations;**
- **maximizing the number of support staff who travel on commercial airlines;**
- **sourcing snacks, drinks and other items in bulk in Canada, whenever possible;**
- **limiting the percentage of contingency meals to 20% or less;**
- **limiting menu choice, including requested changes to caterer menus unless required by dietary restrictions;**
- **eliminating unnecessary items, such as drink garnishes;**
- **using compostable and/or recyclable tableware; and**
- **carrying out food preparation, cleaning, and waste disposal by unionized members of the federal public service, whenever possible. .... 25**

**Recommendation 5**

**That a schedule of rates, including a target price per meal per flight, be developed to aid in cost negotiations and to allow the determination of whether estimated costs received are reasonable, responsible and economical; that this schedule apply multiple variables, such as exchange rates, country-based costs, and availability of multiple providers; and that a procedure be developed and implemented to flag a procurement for review when the estimated costs exceed the rate schedule by a determined percentage..... 25**

**Recommendation 6**

**That guidelines be developed to determine when and how many meals and snacks should be provided for a given trip, factoring in such considerations as length of travel, time of day, complementarity with the travel program, and the ability to provide food and drink before departure, between legs, or after arrival; and that these guidelines be followed whenever feasible. .... 25**

**Recommendation 7**

**That, whenever possible, the parties responsible for the procurement of catering services for the Office of the Governor General negotiate all costs and fees, obtain cost estimates from all available providers to aid in negotiations, and facilitate the selection of the provider with the best value. .... 26**

**Recommendation 8**

**That the Office of the Governor General’s Secretary and departments be proactive in analyzing the costs of each trip upon receipt of all documents related to the trip in order to improve on practices. .... 26**

**Recommendation 9**

**That all necessary measures be taken to improve the financial transparency and accountability of the Office of the Governor General (Head of State), including a requirement for the Office to publish an annual report on its activities on its website, including its financial statements..... 26**

**Recommendation 10**

**That, as recommended in the committee’s 2004 report on the governor general’s role, duties and funding, the Office of the Governor General report on its annual projected plans and priorities and the anticipated results of its activities. In that report, the Office of the Governor General should state the expenses borne by the federal departments and agencies supporting its activities. .... 26**

**Recommendation 11**

**That the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General report quarterly on travel, whether domestic or international, to the Government Operations and Estimates Committee, including itemized disclosures of hospitality expenses and Royal Canadian Air Force costs with all finalized invoices and receipts. .... 26**

**Recommendation 12**

**That federal organizations supporting the Governor General proactively release itemized disclosures of all their finalized expenses for all trips..... 26**

**Recommendation 13**

**That funding used by departments to support the activities of the governor general be transferred to the Office of the Governor General’s Secretary in the main and supplementary estimates, and that these transfers be clearly identified in the public accounts and thereby accounted for in the budgets allocated to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General. .... 27**



# TRAVEL EXPENDITURES RELATED TO THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SECRETARY SINCE 2014

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## INTRODUCTION

According to a [news release](#) from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (OSGG), Her Excellency Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada undertook an official working visit to the Middle East from 17 to 23 March 2022. This visit included stops in Dubai (United Arab Emirates, U.A.E.), Sharjah (U.A.E.), Doha (Qatar) and Kuwait City (Kuwait). The OSGG [indicates](#) that this visit “highlighted the value and necessity of diplomacy and global co-operation” and “was Governor General Simon’s second international visit at the request of the Prime Minister since her installation.”

According to a [sessional paper](#) tabled in the House of Commons on 13 June 2022, Ms. Simon was among 30 passengers to travel on the government’s aircraft as part of the working visit to the Middle East (the official delegation included 10 government representatives, according to the [final program](#)). In the sessional paper, Department of National Defence (DND) reports that the passengers spent a total of \$93,118 on catering services for related flights. As described below, this amount was later revised.

On 21 June 2022, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (the committee) adopted the following [motion](#):

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the expenditure of nearly \$100,000 in public funds for the Office of the Governor General of Canada for catering services during an eight-day tour of the Middle East in March 2022; and that the committee invite the Office of the Governor General and representatives of the Department of National Defence to appear before the committee for a period of two hours on or before September 23, 2022, to answer the questions of the members of the committee.

On 6 October 2022, the committee adopted a second [motion](#) concerning travel expenses for the Governor General.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the expenses of the Office of the Governor General’s Secretary



for its representation activities abroad for the years selected by the committee;

- 1) that, in light of the information disclosed since the meeting on Thursday, September 22, concerning the testimony of representatives of organizations related to the decision-making process and the use of budgets by and for the Office of the Governor General's Secretary, the committee invite the following witnesses to testify:
  - Christine MacIntyre, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol Branch, Office of the Governor General's Secretary;
  - Stewart Wheeler, Chief of Protocol of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development;
  - Senior officials of the Department of Canadian Heritage;
  - Senior representatives of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
  - any other witnesses whom the committee deems appropriate to invite;
- 2) that testimonies take place over at least three meetings and that the committee has the first meeting on its study at the latest on Tuesday, November 15, 2022;<sup>1</sup> the other meetings being scheduled in accordance with the schedule prepared for the other studies taking place;
- 3) that, for the years selected by the committee, the Department of National Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police table the financial reports of the expenses incurred during the foreign trips of the current Governor General, Governor General Julie Payette, and Governor General David Johnston after January 1, 2014, broken down by trip and by item of expenditure including, in particular, accommodation costs, catering costs, caterer costs, travel costs, security costs, and costs for alcohol

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1 Only one meeting was held following the 6 October 2022 motion.

and drinks, indicating the number of people included for each delegation;

- 4) that copies of unredacted invoices associated with the March 2022 trip to the Middle East of the Office of the Governor General's Secretary be produced as well as a list of all foreign trips undertaken by the current Governor General, Governor General Julie Payette, and Governor General David Johnston after January 1, 2014;
- 5) that the documents required under section 4) be submitted in English and French and forwarded no later than Monday, October 31, 2022, at 12p.m. to the Clerk of the committee and that the Clerk forward them upon receipt to the members of the committee;
- 6) that the committee will determine the years for which the documents set out in Section 3) will be produced, and that those documents be forwarded to the clerk of the committee no later than Sunday, January 15, 2023; and
- 7) that the committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.

Following the receipt of all [invoices](#) requested under section 4 of that motion from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (Global Affairs Canada, GAC), DND, the OSGG and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the committee [agreed](#) on 1 December 2022 to request documentation (for section 3 of that motion) for international travel undertaken in the following years:

- 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 (the Right Honourable David Johnston);
- 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 (the Right Honourable Julie Payette); and
- 26 July 2021 to 25 July 2022 (Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Mary Simon).<sup>2</sup>

In addition to examining this documentation, the committee held two meetings to study expenditures related to the OSGG. During these meetings, members heard testimony from six representatives of federal organizations, three of whom—representing DND,

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<sup>2</sup> While fiscal-year data is being requested from former governors general David Johnston and Julie Payette, Mary Simon was sworn in after the start of the fiscal year, on 26 July 2021. The dates for Ms. Simon were selected to ensure a 12-month comparison with former governors general.



GAC and the OSGG—appeared twice. This report summarizes the evidence received during the committee’s studies and presents recommendations to the Government of Canada to ensure the sound management of finances related to the OSGG.

## CONTEXT

Mary Simon was appointed [Governor General of Canada](#) on 26 July 2021. The Governor General represents His Majesty King Charles III in Canada and, on the King’s behalf, acts as Canada’s Head of State. According to its [website](#), the Governor General’s roles include:

- upholding Canada’s system of responsible government by fulfilling constitutional duties;
- acting as Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces;
- representing Canada at home and abroad on behalf of the Sovereign;
- encouraging excellence through the presentation of honours, decorations and awards; and
- fostering unity among Canadians.

The OSGG is responsible for supporting the Governor General in fulfilling her constitutional, state and ceremonial responsibilities in Canada and internationally. According to OSGG’s [financial statements](#) for the 2021–2022 fiscal year, “[i]n addition to the support provided by the [OSGG], four federal government departments and agencies are also mandated to support the activities of the Governor General.” The support and services provided to the OSGG by these departments and agencies are funded from their own budgets and are subject to Treasury Board guidelines. Thus, they are responsible for allocating and managing these funds. The four departments and agencies are:

- DND, which “provides logistical support and transportation ... to the Governor General in an official capacity,” on request;
- the RCMP, which “provides support in matters related to the security and personal protection services ... for the Governor General and his or her spouse, domestically and abroad;”

- GAC, which “advises the Governor General on all matters related to foreign policy and funds activities related to incoming state visits, as well as the Governor General’s international program and activities undertaken at the request of the prime minister;” and
- Canadian Heritage, “which is the lead department for such activities as Royal tours, State funerals, national memorial services and special anniversary celebrations.”

Christine MacIntyre, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol Branch, OSGG, [explained](#) the division of responsibilities for state visits as follows:

Once approved by the government, these visits are planned, coordinated and implemented by the Office of Protocol at Global Affairs Canada for which ... the Chief of Protocol of Canada is responsible in terms of planning, coordinating and executing.

When the use of government aircraft is required for such visits, like the one to the Middle East in March 2022, the Office of Protocol requests support from the Department of National Defence, which coordinates all details related to the aircraft including the provision of in-flight catering.

Lieutenant-General Eric Kenny, Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), DND, [explained](#) that, when providing safe travel for Very Very Important Persons (VVIPs),<sup>3</sup> “the RCAF is responsible for supplying pilots and crews, maintaining security and safety in flight, determining logistics with foreign countries and air traffic controllers, pre-positioning aircraft if required, [and] conducting fuelling and maintenance.”

In terms of catering, the RCAF procures and supplies the meals; Mr. Kenny [stated](#) that RCAF flight stewards work with airport catering services to establish meal options, which GAC reviews and approves. Stuart Wheeler, Chief of Protocol of Canada, GAC, [added](#) that, when reviewing menus, the Office of Protocol [establishes](#) a meal plan and considers operational needs based on the program. This includes considerations such as the time and duration of the flight, dietary restrictions, whether delegates will be fed at an event, and employer obligations for flight staff meals. Ms. MacIntyre [specified](#) that the OSGG is “not involved in the selection, provision or contracting of in-flight catering.” The OSGG only [reviews](#) menus for information purposes and to translate the menus to meet *Official Languages Act* obligations.

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3 Very Very Important Persons include the Royal Family, the Governor General and the Prime Minister.



According to [Mr. Kenny](#),

[c]atering costs are influenced by multiple factors, especially considering the episodic nature of VVIP travel, sometimes to airports where the RCAF aircraft do not frequently travel. For example, the RCAF may be restricted to using a sole catering service. This results when airports restrict catering services to a single catering provider or when the [RCAF] must use certain catering services abroad to ensure that food meets Canadian health and safety standards.

Additionally, foreign catering services may have restricted menu options, resulting in additional expenses if the desired menu is not readily available.

Finally, catering costs also include additional back-end fees, which are common to all airline travel. These include costs related to waste disposal, food delivery and handling and international exchange rates.

These additional fees are included in the catering costs, and are charged regardless of the number of passengers on board. Whatever the flight, we seek to find efficiencies and reduce costs, all the while ensuring safe and secure transportation.

He [added](#) that the RCAF does select where a delegation may stop along a flight route, “but once the location is selected, we work with the local catering companies. In many cases, only a single catering company is available to us.”

Concerning advance visits, Mr. Wheeler [stated](#) that the Office of Protocol, the OSGG, RCAF and RCMP collaborate with teams in the host country or region as part of the planning process. While much of the early planning process can be conducted virtually or by phone, the planning group [travels](#) to the different site options to allow them to see each one in person, “get a feel for the distance travelled,” and negotiate with companies providing the services.

For his part, Michael Duheme, Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing, RCMP, [explained](#) that

the RCMP is responsible for the close protection of the Governor General, but it is not part of the decision-making regarding travel plans or agendas. As such, the protective plan developed by the RCMP is based on decisions that are made by the Governor General's office.

Mr. Duheme described the RCMP's assessment process and noted that “costs can vary greatly depending on the details of the trip and the protective posture required to ensure the integrity of the protectee's close protection.” In addition, he noted that “RCMP members providing such protective services are considered to be in travel status. Their travel arrangements are in accordance with the provisions of the National Joint

Council Travel Directive.” During the RCMP’s review of costs incurred for these services, it found “a general consistency in the cost of close protective services provided to the past governor[s] general and did not identify any discrepancies that could not be accounted for.” The [documentation](#) submitted by the RCMP generally supports this statement.

Melanie Kwong, Director General, Major Events, Commemorations and Capital Experience, Department of Canadian Heritage, [clarified](#) that her department’s “financial responsibilities in relation to governors general is limited to the period between when governors general designate are appointed and when they are sworn in.” As explained in its [response](#) to a committee member’s question, “Canadian Heritage is not involved in the travel expenditures related to governors general once they are sworn in.”

## **COSTS OF THE 2022 OFFICIAL WORKING VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST**

According to [Mr. Wheeler](#),

The international practice of exchanging high-level visits by heads of state and heads of government is a central element of diplomacy and international relations. The Governor General plays an important role in this context by travelling abroad at the request of the government to advance specific Canadian foreign policy objectives...

One of the main objectives of international visits is promoting Canada, as well as strengthening ties between nations and international partners. We meet these objectives by opening doors at the highest level, in order to lay the groundwork in key areas such as trade expansion and investments and establishing dialogue on major international issues.

[He](#) and [Ms. MacIntyre](#) stated that, in the Governor General’s capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces, she visited Canadian troops in Kuwait and Qatar. Another objective was to show gratitude to countries who helped Canada evacuate Canadians from Afghanistan. The Governor General also aimed to reinforce peace and security in the region, with special regard to the backdrop of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

According to [Mr. Wheeler](#), the total cost of the visit, including the advance visit, was \$1.15 million. [Documentation](#) submitted to the committee suggests that the visit cost totalled \$1.17 million due to a DND invoice that was not included in their financial



summary report.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, \$518,741 was paid by the Office of Protocol at GAC, \$155,931 was for RCMP security, and \$499,838 was for the use of DND aircraft, including \$114,770 for in-flight catering expenses.

As Mr. Kenny [explained](#), the in-flight catering costs of \$93,118 reported in June 2022 were based on catering companies' estimates. After federal officials received the invoices, the catering cost was [revised downward](#) to \$80,367. He [specified](#) that this amount did not include airport taxes, administrative fees, security charges or local taxes.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of meal selection, Mr. Wheeler [described](#) how the governor general and their family, in the front cabin, have a choice of two standard menu options that are selected based on cost and dietary restrictions. Most of the delegation, travelling in the main cabin, do not have a choice between menu items. In response to members' questions, Mr. Kenny [explained](#) that the crew have the same menu selection but eat the option that remains after other passengers are served.<sup>6</sup>

When asked whether the menus for this visit included "excesses," Mr. Kenny [responded](#) that "[t]he way we select the menu is that we go to the catering company... what we look at is effectively chicken, beef and fish." In response to a similar question, Mr. Wheeler [said](#) that "standard commercial airline-practice meals is what we're ordering, in line with health and safety and travel regulations."

Ms. MacIntyre [stated](#) that the OSGG did not make any special catering requests, [nor](#) did the Governor General make any decisions or voice preference about any "travel, accommodation, catering or any of the administrative and logistical arrangements discussed here." She [said](#) that "the meals that we received were the same ones that are served on board commercial flights. Nothing in the menus gave cause for alarm." She [added](#) that "[t]he costs were really shocking to all of us. We had eggs. We had omelettes."

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4 A Deluxe Catering Ltd. [invoice](#) of £17,170 (C\$27,246) for in-flight catering in London on 17 March 2022 was included in the invoices but not in the [invoice summary](#) sent to the committee by the Department of National Defence [DND]. Amounts reported in this report may also include administrative fees or local taxes.

5 Amounts listed in this report may include administrative fees or local taxes.

6 He also [clarified](#) that members of the Canadian Armed Forces "do not always [receive] the same types of meals on [RCAF] flights as compared to the flights of VVIPs," but noted [that](#) their costs are different because they source food from military facilities and fly through military airports.

During the officials' second appearance, a member asked why there was a discrepancy between the information provided to the committee in the officials' first appearance and media reports of more elaborate meals.<sup>7</sup> Ms. MacIntyre responded that her comments

were based on my experience of being involved with official international visits over many years. I was giving an example of food that was served on the Middle East flight that was consistent with food that had been served on previous government flights that I had been on. I was not attempting to justify or normalize these costs in any way. I was trying to provide context to the committee about why, when learning about the costs of the visit, I was so surprised.

When asked why the media reported information that federal organizations had not made available to the committee during the officials' first appearance, Mr. Kenny stated:

Some of the information was released as part of an access to information request, which was made available to those who requested the information... Since we met, I have learned a lot more about the costs that go into catering. I'd be happy to share some of those details.

It was never our intention at all to deceive or to provide you with false information. It's just that some additional information has come out since then.

Mr. Kenny said that he had received the invoices at the time of his first appearance but they only showed the cost breakdown for some, but not all, meals and locations. He added that his office provided the full breakdown in response to the committee's request after the first meeting.

Mr. Kenny specified that catering companies do not always provide estimates until the RCAF is finalizing the menu, but that with longer lead times, the RCAF may receive cost estimates earlier in the process. He was not able to provide an estimate of the proportion of total catering costs associated with elements other than food, because "catering companies don't break that down for us. In fact, they don't necessarily break down the costs per menu, either." Mr. Kenny explained further that catering costs include five factors: protein costs ranging from \$23 to \$90; a tray set-up fee (a bun, salad, and dessert) costing at times roughly the same amount; food and snacks; "overages" (or contingency meals), which were previously set at 65% and are now

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7 See, for example, Bryan Passifiume, "[Beef Wellington, \\$230 flowers: More details on how Governor General spent \\$99K on catering](#)," *National Post*, 23 September 2022. Note that some costs in this article differ from those presented in this report.



at 20%; and back-end fees costing up to 20%. However, the back-end fees cost 50% for one leg of the Middle East visit.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Kenny added that the RCAF cannot negotiate catering costs, and that it can only seek better value when more than one catering option is available. He also told members that the RCAF receives operations and maintenance funds for VVIP travel each year but does not allocate specific amounts for each flight.

The documentation sent to the committee shows that the government purchased certain food items, such as snacks, in Canada prior to travel. Mr. Kenny confirmed that the flight steward brought Tim Hortons canisters onto the plane for the Ottawa–London leg.

The advance trip for the Middle East visit included 12 people. According to Mr. Wheeler, public servants travelling for advance visits use commercial airlines and follow Treasury Board guidelines. As a result, for longer legs of the trip, such as Toronto–Qatar, they likely travelled in business class.

In response to a question about car rental costs for cancelled legs of the visit, Mr. Wheeler stated that there were no sunk costs because the service provider from the cancelled Abu-Dhabi leg provided the service in Dubai as well.

In response to a member’s question, Mr. Wheeler acknowledged that it took media inquiries to bring “such exorbitant costs” to officials’ attention and reiterated that public servants have a duty to “ensure sound and transparent management of public funds.” Ms. MacIntyre spoke of the organizations’ efforts, moving forward, to continually review processes on an ongoing basis rather than in response to external reviews.

## **COST COMPARISONS**

The committee requested one year’s documentation on international travel for Ms. Simon, Ms. Payette and Mr. Johnston. For Ms. Payette and Mr. Johnston, the committee selected the year with the highest number of international visits since 2014. For Ms. Simon, July 2021 to June 2022 was selected because it was her first year in office and information on 2022–2023 is not yet available. Ms. MacIntyre noted that it is difficult to compare international and domestic travel costs because different factors,

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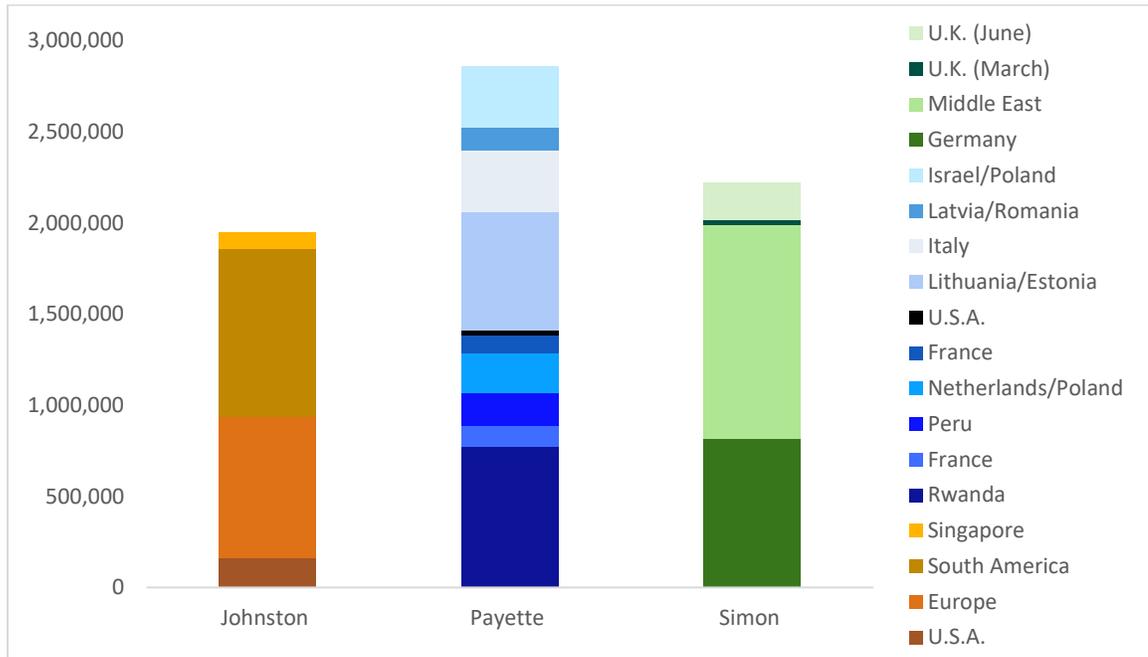
8 Back-end fees include handling and delivery, storage, cleaning and disposal of international waste and taxes.

such as the size of the delegations and the budgetary support from other departments, tend to influence their costs.

The documentation provided to the committee reveals that the cost per visit for governor general travel is variable depending upon the destination, length of the visit, size of the delegation, type of aircraft and how many official heads of state are involved. Figure 1 compares the cost of each governor general's international visits in the selected years. A more complete overview of travel costs associated with each visit is provided in Table 1.



**Figure 1—Spending on Official International Travel by Governors  
General: Selected Years (\$)**



Notes: Data is incomplete. The Department of National Defence (DND) did not send data for Mr. Johnston’s 2014 visit to the United States, citing its record-keeping policy. DND also notes that costs for the United Kingdom in March 2022 may not be up to date. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police did not send data for the visits to Latvia and Romania in 2019 or the United Kingdom in March 2022. As a result, these four costs are under-estimates.

David Johnston’s Saudi Arabia visit to pay condolences to King Abdullah has been excluded entirely here because it was a combined international/domestic visit and cost estimates sent by departments appear incomplete, with reported costs under \$2,500.

Figures for Mr. Johnston and Ms. Payette reflect fiscal years. Figures for Ms. Simon reflect July 2021 to June 2022, her first full year in office.

Costs may include administrative fees or local taxes and are not adjusted for inflation. According to the [Bank of Canada](#), the Consumer Price Index rose by 23% from 2014 to 2022. Travel expenses recorded here may vary from that rate of inflation.

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, [Documents submitted pursuant to the motions adopted by the committee on Thursday, October 6, 2022, and Thursday, December 1, 2022.](#)

**Table 1—Overview of Spending on International Travel for the Governor General in Selected Years (2014–2015; 2019–2020; 2021–2022)**

Governor General	Year	Country Visited	Days	Official Delegates	Cost per Visit
Johnston	2014	United States	6	7	\$163,758*
Johnston	2014	Europe	8	41	\$772,379
Johnston	2014	South America	8	46	\$920,401
Johnston	2015	Singapore	4	4	\$88,936*
<b>Johnston</b>	<b>2014–2015</b>	<b>AVERAGE/TOTAL</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>\$2,221,143*</b>
Payette	2019	Rwanda	6	37	\$771,546
Payette	2019	France	4	8	\$116,828
Payette	2019	Peru	6	8	\$181,787
Payette	2019	Netherlands/Poland	6	12	\$213,810
Payette	2019	France	5	5	\$99,380
Payette	2019	USA	2	6	\$28,408
Payette	2019	Lithuania/Estonia	5	33	\$649,604
Payette	2019	Italy	6	10	\$338,070
Payette	2019	Latvia/Romania	2	12	\$124,104*
Payette	2020	Israel/Poland	8	16	\$336,742
<b>Payette</b>	<b>2019–2020</b>	<b>AVERAGE/TOTAL</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>\$2,860,279*</b>
Simon	2022	Germany	3	31	\$815,330
Simon	2022	Middle East	8	10	\$1,174,510
Simon	2022	United Kingdom	3	7	\$26,078*
Simon	2022	United Kingdom	5	7	\$205,225
<b>Simon</b>	<b>2022–2023</b>	<b>AVERAGE/TOTAL</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>\$1,945,474</b>

Notes: \*Data is incomplete. The Department of National Defence (DND) did not send data for Mr. Johnston's 2014 visit to the United States, citing its record-keeping policy. DND also notes that costs for the United Kingdom in March 2022 may not be up to date. The Royal Canadian



Mounted Police did not send data for the visits to Latvia and Romania in 2019 or the United Kingdom in March 2022. As a result, these four costs are under-estimates.

David Johnston's Saudi Arabia visit to pay condolences to King Abdullah has been excluded entirely here because it was a combined international/domestic visit and cost estimates sent by departments appear incomplete, with reported costs under \$2,500.

Figures for Mr. Johnston and Ms. Payette reflect fiscal years. Figures for Ms. Simon reflect July 2021 to June 2022, her first full year in office.

Costs may include administrative fees or local taxes and are not adjusted for inflation. According to the [Bank of Canada](#), the Consumer Price Index rose by 23% from 2014 to 2022. Travel expenses recorded here may vary from that rate of inflation.

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, [Documents submitted pursuant to the motions adopted by the committee on Thursday, October 6, 2022, and Thursday, December 1, 2022.](#)

In her first year, Ms. Simon undertook three official visits in addition to her visit to the Middle East, including one delegation of 31 to Germany in October 2021 at a total cost of \$815,330.<sup>9</sup> In addition, she travelled with two smaller delegations to England in March and June 2022. The total cost of Ms. Simon's four visits was over \$2.2 million.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in fiscal year 2014–2015, Mr. Johnston undertook four official visits to the United States, Europe, South America and Singapore, including large visits to the heads of state in Poland, the Netherlands and Belgium (41 official delegates) as well as in Chile and Columbia (46 official delegates). The cost of the eight-day visit to South America was \$920,401, including \$57,290 for in-flight catering. The total cost of Mr. Johnston's three visits was over \$1.9 million.<sup>11</sup>

In 2019–2020, Julie Payette undertook 10 official visits to: Rwanda; France; Peru; Netherlands and Poland; France; United States; Lithuania and Estonia; Italy; Latvia and Romania; and Israel and Poland. The most expensive of these was a delegation of 37 to

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9 There appear to be duplicate invoices submitted for catering in Frankfurt of \$18,915 and \$2,212, which have been removed from the total.

10 Exact figures are not available due to missing Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) data and incomplete DND data for her March 2022 visit to the UK.

11 Exact figures are not available due to missing DND data for Mr. Johnston's April 2014 visit to the USA, and possibly for his March 2015 visit to pay Canada's condolences to the Prime Minister of Singapore.

Rwanda to mark the 25th anniversary of the genocide at \$771,546, including \$30,228 for in-flight catering. The total cost of her 10 visits was approximately \$2.9 million.<sup>12</sup>

Ms. Payette's per-visit costs were at times significantly lower than her peers, because four of her 10 visits were with commercial airlines rather than government aircraft. Ms. Simon and Mr. Johnston's travel costs appear comparable, given inflation in the intervening years.

The average visit length ranges from 5.0 days for Ms. Payette to 6.5 days for Mr. Johnston. Similarly, the average official delegation size ranges from 13.8 for Ms. Simon to 31.3 for Mr. Johnston.

Of the visits reviewed, Ms. Simon's visit to the Middle East was the most expensive (\$1.17 million), followed by Mr. Johnston's visit to South America (\$920,401) and Ms. Simon's visit to Germany (\$815,330). See Table 1.<sup>13</sup>

## MEASURES TO ADDRESS COSTS

Following Ms. Simon's visit to the Middle East, Mr. Wheeler recognized that "the system we had in place was not delivering the kind of oversight and control that Canadian taxpayers deserve." Thus, the organizations involved were working together to improve it and had already implemented some measures. He said that the objective was to "instill a no-nonsense environment where exorbitant costs need to be flagged" and alternatives can be explored.

Ms. MacIntyre explained that the OSGG coordinated with GAC and DND to review in-flight catering costs and implement measures as early as June 2022 to "improve efficiencies... strengthen accountability and ensure maximum value for public funds." They also "convene[d] all offices involved in these flights on an ongoing basis to further identify ways to reduce costs and to maximize efficiencies wherever possible." According to Ms. MacIntyre, the organizations were working "to add further structure and rigour to planning and coordination."

Mr. Wheeler estimated that, as of December 2022, the working group had met "dozens" of times and developed a list of cost-saving options. According to Mr. Kenny, the government had taken measures, in 2022 and 2019, to lower costs by reducing the

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12 Exact figures are not available due to missing RCMP data for the December 2019 visit to Latvia and Romania.

13 The most expensive in-flight catering costs overall appear to stem from Ms. Simon's visit to the Middle East, despite having only 10 official delegates.



number of contingency meals available to passengers. As of June 2022, the [practice](#) is to provide 20% more meals as contingencies, down from 65%. Mr. Wheeler also [said](#) that on some flights, meal choice was eliminated altogether.

During their second appearance, the officials explained that they had made progress toward improving scrutiny of travel costs. Ms. MacIntyre [noted](#) that the OSGG has asked its partners from the RCAF and GAC “to raise flags when required.” Mr. Wheeler [said](#) that these flags allow decision-makers to make alternative choices or forgo standard elements of catering menus, such as drink garnishes. In addition, he [stated](#) that future meal selections will be sourced from menus without requested changes and [that](#) snacks will be minimal. Soft drinks and snacks will also be sourced in Canada to take advantage of bulk purchasing, and disposable cups will be used to reduce cleaning costs, which the government cannot control.

Nevertheless, Mr. Kenny [added](#) that efforts to reduce costs depend upon “the reality of catering services offered at airports worldwide.” [He](#) and [Mr. Wheeler](#) stated that some locations are more expensive than others, and there are many limitations on the government’s ability to select different cities as destinations or as part of the flight route. [For example](#), the U.A.E. government requested that the delegation land at a specific government airport rather than the main commercial airport. Mr. Kenny also [pointed out](#) that airport taxes and handling fees contribute to “high costs associated with aviation.”

Mr. Wheeler [suggested](#) that planners could learn from experience and consider whether certain airports unreasonably inflate certain costs, and [agreed](#) with a member that having a band of reasonable cost limits could be a helpful planning tool. Ms. MacIntyre [added](#) that Treasury Board per diems already account for different food costs in different countries. However, these per diems do not apply to VVIP in-flight catering costs. In response to the suggestion of a price cap, Mr. Wheeler [commented](#) that the difference in visits’ complexity and operational needs would make that strategy difficult to implement.

In terms of communications costs, Mr. Wheeler [stated](#) that the government examines whether purchasing mobile “pucks”—which can be reused and can allow for bulk purchasing of cheaper SIM cards—would be more cost effective than incurring mobile roaming charges.<sup>14</sup> He also [explained](#) that, for travel costs beyond in-flight catering, the Office of Protocol arranges for missions to have standard, competitive processes for hotel, transportation and other hospitality suppliers. Mr. Wheeler also [stated](#) that GAC

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14 Pucks provide mobile Wi-Fi, or a router that acts as a hotspot.

funds are designated for use in the same fiscal year and cannot be rolled forward, and that GAC senior officials' performance-management agreements consider the proper implementation of planned budgetary resources. He specified that the Office of Protocol, rather than missions, bears the costs for high-level dignitaries. There is a final accounting of the visit, and costs incurred by missions are recovered by the appropriate department.

In 2004, the committee published a report on the governor general's role, duties and funding. When asked if the OSGG would consider implementing the recommendation to remove the governor general's constitutional exemption from reporting to parliament, Ms. MacIntyre told the committee that her office would review the recommendation. She noted, however, that the OSGG now publishes an annual report on its activities and associated costs at the OSGG and its partner departments.

Mr. Wheeler indicated that the GAC Office of Protocol publishes its spending through the Public Accounts of Canada, responds to order-paper questions and access-to-information requests, and follows all federal financial procedures. For each visit, his office proactively releases spending broken down by accommodation, transportation and other categories. The OSGG, RCMP and DND also publish spending through the annual Public Accounts.

## **COMMITTEE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The committee appreciates the efforts undertaken by federal organizations supporting the governor general to ensure the sound stewardship of public funds, particularly since the costs of the Middle East visit were reported to Parliament. It recognizes that efforts to minimize costs are sometimes constrained by factors beyond the Government of Canada's control.

However, the committee notes that some federal officials did not provide complete information during their first appearance. Members were surprised to learn more details about travel expenses in media reports the following day, despite departments having access to that information when witnesses were appearing before the committee. Similarly, as explained above, federal organizations did not always send complete financial information for each visit. The committee takes seriously its duty to examine public spending and cannot do so adequately if it lacks transparency from federal organizations.



Consequently, the committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada take steps to improve coordination and oversight on decisions related to Very Very Important Person (VVIP) travel, such as, but not limited to:**

- **increasing planning lead time;**
- **ensuring cohesive inter-departmental planning for such trips, particularly developing a trip plan and examining the logistics early in the planning phase;**
- **monitoring and validating cost during the execution phase; and**
- **sharing best practices and lessons learned with respect to planning and oversight of VVIP travel among all offices that deal with VVIP travel, both international and domestic.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada review the practice of VVIP international travel with the goal of ensuring good value for money to further key government priorities and objectives.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**That catering costs and other cost-influencing factors, such as availability of multiple catering providers, handling services, or possible partnerships with Canadian airlines on catering and handling, be factored into the choice of airport and travel location whenever feasible, and that locations with unionized work environments be selected whenever possible.**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That federal organizations supporting the governor general regularly examine the cost-effectiveness of travel, without affecting operational effectiveness by:**

- **reducing the overall size of delegations;**
- **maximizing the number of support staff who travel on commercial airlines;**
- **sourcing snacks, drinks and other items in bulk in Canada, whenever possible;**
- **limiting the percentage of contingency meals to 20% or less;**
- **limiting menu choice, including requested changes to caterer menus unless required by dietary restrictions;**
- **eliminating unnecessary items, such as drink garnishes;**
- **using compostable and/or recyclable tableware; and**
- **carrying out food preparation, cleaning, and waste disposal by unionized members of the federal public service, whenever possible.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That a schedule of rates, including a target price per meal per flight, be developed to aid in cost negotiations and to allow the determination of whether estimated costs received are reasonable, responsible and economical; that this schedule apply multiple variables, such as exchange rates, country-based costs, and availability of multiple providers; and that a procedure be developed and implemented to flag a procurement for review when the estimated costs exceed the rate schedule by a determined percentage.**

#### **Recommendation 6**

**That guidelines be developed to determine when and how many meals and snacks should be provided for a given trip, factoring in such considerations as length of travel, time of day, complementarity with the travel program, and the ability to provide food and drink before departure, between legs, or after arrival; and that these guidelines be followed whenever feasible.**



#### **Recommendation 7**

**That, whenever possible, the parties responsible for the procurement of catering services for the Office of the Governor General negotiate all costs and fees, obtain cost estimates from all available providers to aid in negotiations, and facilitate the selection of the provider with the best value.**

#### **Recommendation 8**

**That the Office of the Governor General's Secretary and departments be proactive in analyzing the costs of each trip upon receipt of all documents related to the trip in order to improve on practices.**

#### **Recommendation 9**

**That all necessary measures be taken to improve the financial transparency and accountability of the Office of the Governor General (Head of State), including a requirement for the Office to publish an annual report on its activities on its website, including its financial statements.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

**That, as recommended in the committee's 2004 report on the governor general's role, duties and funding, the Office of the Governor General report on its annual projected plans and priorities and the anticipated results of its activities. In that report, the Office of the Governor General should state the expenses borne by the federal departments and agencies supporting its activities.**

#### **Recommendation 11**

**That the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General report quarterly on travel, whether domestic or international, to the Government Operations and Estimates Committee, including itemized disclosures of hospitality expenses and Royal Canadian Air Force costs with all finalized invoices and receipts.**

#### **Recommendation 12**

**That federal organizations supporting the Governor General proactively release itemized disclosures of all their finalized expenses, for all trips.**

**Recommendation 13**

**That funding used by departments to support the activities of the governor general be transferred to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary in the main and supplementary estimates, and that these transfers be clearly identified in the public accounts and thereby accounted for in the budgets allocated to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General.**



## APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

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The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

### Travel Expenditures Related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary since 2014

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>Department of Canadian Heritage</b> Melanie Kwong, Director General, Major Events, Commemorations and Capital Experience	2022/12/12	46
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b> Stewart Wheeler, Chief of Protocol of Canada	2022/12/12	46
<b>Department of National Defence</b> Eric Kenny, Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force	2022/12/12	46
<b>Office of the Governor General's Secretary</b> Christine MacIntyre, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol Branch	2022/12/12	46
<b>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</b> Michael Duheme, Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing Taro Philippe Tan, Officer in Charge, Very Important Persons Protection Detail, Governor General Protection Detail and Supreme Court Detachment	2022/12/12	46



## APPENDIX B LIST OF WITNESSES

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The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

### Expenditures Related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary

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<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b> Stewart Wheeler, Chief of Protocol of Canada	2022/09/22	28
<b>Department of National Defence</b> Eric Kenny, Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force	2022/09/22	28
<b>Office of the Governor General's Secretary</b> Christine MacIntyre, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol Branch	2022/09/22	28



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 28, 46, 54, 58 and 76](#)) in relation to the study of travel expenditures related to the Office of the Governor General's Secretary since 2014 is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly McCauley  
Chair



# Supplementary Opinion of the Conservative Party of Canada

## Introduction

The Conservative Party has serious concerns regarding the spending practices of the Office of the Governor General, for both travel and personal expenditures.

Initially, concerns were raised regarding the current Governor General's trip to the Middle East in March 2022. However, since then more concerning information has emerged about the Governor General's expenditures.

## Spending on Travel

During the trip to the Middle East, the Governor General's delegation spent nearly \$100,000 on in-flight catering.

One example of many, from the *absurdity* of this spending was hundreds of dollars spent on limes and lemons to be used as garnishes for drinks.

Following this revelation there was further egregious spending that came to light.

During a four-day trip to Iceland, the Governor General billed \$71,000 for a limo service.

In her first full year of travel, the Office of the Governor General spent over \$2.7 million on travel. Over \$2 million was spent on four international trips, with the remainder being spent on domestic travel.

The trip to the Middle East cost approximately \$1.3 million.

During the study, the Committee compared the travel expenses of the current Governor General with the travel expenditures of past Governors General.

While it is understandable the Governor General acts as the Head of State and must travel to fulfill certain duties of his/her role, the rate of spending is completely unacceptable.

## Spending On Clothing

While the study was ongoing, reports emerged that the Governor General spent over \$37,000 on clothing during her first 15 months in office.

This type of lavish spending erodes the trust of Canadians in the Office of the Governor General.

### **Attempted Motion to Reduce Funding**

In response to the Office of the Governor General's spending on travel and the Governor General's spending on clothing, the Conservative Members on the committee attempted to pass a motion which would reduce the budget by the combined cost of catering from the trip to the Middle East and clothing expenses of the current Governor General.

Though this motion failed due to the Liberal and NDP Members, Conservative Members believe measures should be taken to reduce the Governor General's budget.

### **Conclusion**

Since 2017, the Governors General have billed \$88,000 in clothing expenses. The Governor General is very well compensated with a salary (\$351,600) which nearly matches the salary of the Prime Minister of Canada.

This salary has increased by over \$48,000 over the last five years.

It is obvious that after eight years of this Prime Minister there is a complete lack of regard for taxpayers' money. This extends to the Office of the Governor General. This is unacceptable to Canadians.

We are in dire need of more transparency and better stewardship of taxpayers' money.

### **Recommendations**

In order to restore the trust of Canadians in the role of the GG, the government should enact the following recommendations:

1. Reforming the Governor General's pension to match the pension of an MP. Currently, former Governors General receive a pension of roughly \$150,000 per year, regardless of the length of time in office.
2. Ending the clothing allowance.
3. Ending the expense account for former governors general and
4. Legislating a requirement for the Office of the Governor General to publish on its website an annual report on its activities, including its financial statements, similar to that of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor General of Australia.

## **BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS DISSENTING REPORT ON GOVERNOR GENERAL'S EXPENSES**

The Bloc Québécois is not opposed to the committee's recommendations; however, it believes that the recommendations treat the symptoms, not the disease, which is that an honorary and colonialist position is costing a fortune to citizens struggling to make ends meet. Therefore, the Bloc Québécois proposes addressing the root cause by making the following recommendation: That the federal government abolish the position of Governor General of Canada

