



STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

ALISTAIR COE MLA (CHAIR), MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), ANDREW BRADDOCK MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE NO 17 and 21
Friday, 5 March 2021

Asked by **MR COE** on **5 MARCH 2021: THE SPEAKER**, took on notice the following questions:

[Ref: 5 March 2021, UPT pp 24-25 and p 35]

In relation to:

1. The statement of income and expenses on page 124 of the Office's annual report and particularly the employee expenses, which is less than what it was anticipated to be, according to the budget - what portion of that \$500,000 or so would have been attributed to fewer hours for (a) Attendants and (b) Hansard?
2. Please advise the total expenses for (a) the Attendants; and (b) Hansard for the last five financial years.

MADAM SPEAKER: The answer to the Member's questions is as follows:–

1. The statement of income and expenses on page 124 of the Office annual report – which Mr Coe referred to in his question about reduced hours for the Attendants – actually relates to the Office's Territorial budget and so the employee expenses shown in that financial statement are for members and members' staff and not staff of the Office. Because the context of the question was about Attendant hours, the official giving evidence at the hearing did not realise that the financial statement in question did not contain Attendant staff costs.

So, before turning to the hours performed by the Office's Attendants, the main factor that contributed to the significantly lower than budgeted employee expenses in the (Territorial) financial statement Mr Coe referred to is a historical and technical budgeting issue that results in the Territorial Employee Expense budget being set, and then indexed, at a higher level than what is required to meet those expenses.

Turning to the question of reduced hours performed by (a) Attendant and (b) Hansard staff, I firstly wish to draw the committee's attention to the policy applied across the public sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that, where casual staff were not rostered due to unavailability of work caused by COVID-19 related closures or reductions in agency operations, agencies would continue to pay casual staff for the work they would otherwise have performed. Accordingly, any casual staff who worked reduced hours suffered no loss of income.

2. The total expenses for (a) the Attendants and (b) Hansard for the last five financial years are as follows:

Attendant Staff	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016	
Permanent Staff	\$	338,551	\$	362,870	\$	418,005	\$	425,307	\$	445,725
Casual Staff	\$	195,363	\$	151,584	\$	160,685	\$	184,636	\$	215,682
Total	\$	533,914	\$	514,454	\$	578,690	\$	609,943	\$	661,406

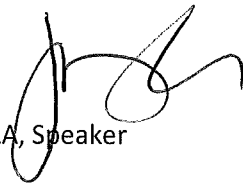
The decrease of permanent staff cost in 2020 is due to two Attendant staff being assigned to a home based work project during the COVID pandemic and the increase in the cost of casual staff reflects the increased engagement of casual staff to cover the vacancies caused by the absence of the two permanent staff

Hansard	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016	
Permanent Staff	\$	359,533	\$	313,720	\$	303,270	\$	243,698	\$	172,756
Casual Staff	\$	186,211	\$	185,867	\$	184,693	\$	114,745	\$	191,646
Total	\$	545,744	\$	499,588	\$	487,963	\$	358,444	\$	364,402

The increase in permanent staff cost in 2020 is due to an extended period of paid leave of the retiring previous Editor of Debates after a replacement Editor was recruited. The increase in permanent staff cost in 2018 was due to the creation of a new position.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Signature:



By Joy Burch MLA, Speaker

Date:

12/3/2021