

Questions standing committees can ask

When reviewing reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports, committees can ask several questions.

Government policy and direction

Are the strategic outcomes (objectives) and costs of the program reasonable?

- Would taxpayers agree that these are wise investments and the right priorities?
- Do the program and its objectives continue to make sense in today's context?
- Is the level of resources appropriate?
- Are the risks, challenges and the course of action adequately discussed?

Are the strategic outcomes (objectives) and costs of the program clearly described and linked with other horizontal results?

- Is the program's overall direction clear?
- Is it clear what planned results are to be achieved in the short, medium and long term, by when, and at what cost?
- Is it clear what would have to be accomplished for the program to be judged a success?
- Is the program adequately linked to the related horizontal results of other programs?

Benefits for Canadians

Has the program delivered the planned results?

- Is there a logical, credible link between the outputs (services provided) and the planned outcomes?
- Is the program achieving its strategic outcome and planned results?
- Is the program sustainable in light of the risks and challenges?

Is the financial information adequate?

- Is it clear what has been and will be spent on the program?
- Are significant year-to-year variations in expenditures or revenues explained?

Was the program's contribution to the results achieved explained well?

- What things other than the program's activities could affect the results discussed, for example, external economic and social factors?
- Are the measures used to report results clear and reasonable?
- Is the evidence presented relevant and reliable?

Delivery of the program

Was the program managed with proper attention to fairness, propriety and sustainable development?

- Is there assurance that public sector values and ethics are integrated in management controls, for example, codes of conduct?
- Does performance information provide assurance of fairness in service delivery?
- Is the sustainable development strategy effective?

Better ways of delivering results

Could the program be managed more efficiently?

- Can the program be redesigned to produce the same result at less cost or to produce better results for the same cost?

Could the results be delivered more effectively?

- Has the right balance been achieved among the various delivery instruments, for example, policy, regulation, and direct program delivery?
- Would collaborating with other levels of government or the private sector be more effective?

Usefulness of the Estimates documents

Could the documents be made more useful for the committee's policy and legislative agenda?

- Would including additional information in the Estimates documents be useful?
- Have the departments responded to previous committee suggestions and recommendations?