

Additional Estimates Question on Notice — March 2017

106 **Senator the Hon. Penny Wong:** asked the President of the Senate—

Noting the President's response to 2016-17 Supplementary Budget Estimates question on notice 46 that:

The provision of this correspondence would not be appropriate due to the longstanding convention that correspondence to a Presiding Officer is not given to committees of the other chamber. In accordance with this convention, correspondence to a Speaker would not be given to Senate committees; similarly, correspondence to a President would not be given to House committees. The correspondence in question was addressed to both Presiding Officers.

Using this logic, it would also not be possible for a House of Representatives committee to request the letter as it was also addressed to the President.

- (1) When a letter is addressed to both presiding officers, why is it not the case that each chamber can request a copy from its respective presiding officer?
- (2) If neither chamber can receive the letter, is this not just a means of avoiding scrutiny?

Answer

As such correspondence is addressed to both Presiding Officers, the practice established by my predecessors which I follow is that both the President and the Speaker must each agree to the release of such correspondence. If one Presiding Officer does not agree, then the other cannot unilaterally choose to release such correspondence.