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The Honourable Rob Moore

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Welcome to our witnesses today. This is the first day of our study on the review of national protocol procedures.

For the first hour we have witnesses from the Department of Canadian Heritage. For the second hour we will have witnesses from the House of Commons and the Parliament of Canada.

With us today from the Department of Canadian Heritage are Nicole Bourget, Denis Racine, and Joel Girouard. Welcome to all of you.

Nicole, I understand you're going to begin. We usually have 10 minutes for your opening comments, and then we have questions and answers from our committee members. The floor is yours.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget (Assistant Deputy Minister, Sport, Major Events and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

[Translation]

First let me thank the committee for inviting us here today to discuss issues of national protocol.

As Mr. Moore mentioned, my name is Nicole Bourget and I am the Assistant Deputy Minister of Sport, Major Events and Regions at the Department of Canadian Heritage. I am joined by Denis Racine, Executive Director, Major Events and Celebrations and Joel Girouard, Director, State Ceremonial and Protocol.

Although the issue of protocol is not generally given a lot of outside attention, it is foundational to all of the national ceremonies in Canada and defines the etiquette for the treatment of national symbols such as the national flag of Canada.

Today we would like to take this opportunity to provide the committee with an overview of the types of protocol issues we are responsible for. We will then be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The responsibility for national protocol falls under the mandate of the Department of Canadian Heritage under the Department of Canadian Heritage Act. Protocol, by definition, has to be flexible and adapt to the various players on the political or social stage. Developed through years of experience, officials at the Department of Canadian Heritage have significant experience in the area of national protocol. This experience is put into practice in the delivery of numerous events such as royal tours, state funerals, installations of governors general.

The department also acts as a centre of expertise on issues of domestic protocol and procedures. This includes the rules surrounding the national flag of Canada, its half-masting, display and use. We respond to inquiries from the public on national symbols, the use of royal images, the prefix "royal" and the use of symbols for commercial purposes. This role also involves on-going communication and liaison with provincial and territorial government protocol offices.

[English]

I would like to take some time to provide more details on protocol in national events, specifically royal tours and state funerals.

Her Majesty The Queen has toured Canada 22 times. Her Majesty's most recent visit to Canada was in 2010, and in 2011 Canada received Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. This month, as you know, Canada will host the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

It is important to note the distinction between official and private visits. An official visit is at the invitation of the Governor General. A private visit is one where a member of the royal family undertakes engagements with or on behalf of private organizations. The Department of Canadian Heritage is only involved in official visits.

Royal tours are truly a team effort. The department is not only responsible for planning the tour and ensuring coordination between various partners. We also work with several other federal departments, the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, representatives from the provinces and territories as well as the royal household, and the Canadian Secretary to the Queen.

Next I'd like to highlight the role the department plays in managing state funerals. A state funeral may be held to honour and commemorate present and former governors general, present and former prime ministers, sitting members of the ministry, and other eminent Canadians at the discretion of the Prime Minister. These national ceremonies provide the occasion for the public to participate in a demonstration of national homage and mourning.

Each state funeral is different, depending on the predetermined wishes of the deceased and the wishes of the family. They do, however, contain some common elements. The department is responsible for the overall coordination of all aspects of the event including the lying in state; the funeral procession; the funeral service; the committal, which may include components of military honours; and the post-committal reception.

•(1110)

The Department of Canadian Heritage is the lead federal department. However, many other government departments as well as provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are involved in the organization and delivery of a state funeral, depending on the complexity and size of the funeral.

[*Translation*]

While the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General manages issues of protocol for the sitting Governor General, once a new Governor General is identified, it is the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage to provide support for the Governor General Designate until she or he officially assumes office.

The installation ceremony is a major protocol event. It sets the tone for the new Governor General's term and serves as a reflection of the important issues that the Governor General Designate wishes to highlight. As with other significant political events, the department works with numerous partners.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the department acts as a centre of expertise on numerous aspects of issues including the proper use of the national flag of Canada.

In this respect, the most visible contribution of the department is in terms of the administration of the Rules for Half-masting the National Flag of Canada. Half-masting being a well-established procedure to bestow an honour and express a collective sense of sorrow.

[*English*]

I thank you all for your time and we'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

The first questioner is Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This may sound like a stupid question, but is there a manual that guides the department on protocol? Is there a manual on how to handle a state funeral? If so, how has it been developed?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: The department has various documents, administrative templates, I call them. It's a how-to list for various events. For example, with state funerals there are certain procedures to follow. The same with a royal visit or a massive state event.

These documents, I call evergreen, because they're based on convention and past practice. We have a lot of background information that we hold in the department, for both past royal visits and past state funerals. We don't have one single one, because it's in constant evolution. Each visit or funeral is unique. A royal visit, for example, is based on the size and the scope, the number of

cities visited, the events, and maybe whether it's part of our Canada Day celebrations. All the workings vary and we adapt each visit based on some basic premises.

A state funeral is really based on the wishes of the deceased, if they were predetermined, as was the case with Monsieur LeBlanc and Mr. Hnatyshyn and their family members.

If you want a lying in state, for example, we saw with Mr. Layton's funeral that we sometimes need to do it in two cities. We had it in Toronto as well as Ottawa, which had not been done in the past. Some families may choose not to have a lying in state.

There is basic information that we use as reference material. The reason that we don't have something firm is that it's evergreen. Protocol evolves with time, personal wishes, and the people we are serving. Guidelines exist and they have existed since way before my time at the department, back to the earliest royal visits that were handled years ago.

We work very closely with our partners, and they have information too. When we're working with DND, for example, they have their own procedures that they walk through with the RCMP, for security purposes. We also work with Public Works, which specializes in helping to plan the venues and the physical aspects of the space. Then there is what we do. We work within the federal family, with the provinces, and with the cities. We lend that expertise.

In the case of Mr. Layton, we offered the City of Toronto advice on how to plan, how to work with the police, how to do the various steps.

Of course there are communications materials and templates for announcing a royal tour, or for putting out a media guide for visits.

I would say we have a variety of documents, administrative templates, that help us realize our work.

•(1115)

Mr. Paul Calandra: As protocol changes over time, how do you make sure that the traditions that are being followed, or as they are being modified, fall within the traditions of our founding peoples?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: In those templates that I'm speaking about, there are certain standards. For example, with respect to a royal visit, there are steps that you cannot escape. There are royal salutes and other things. I'll let Joel, who is currently managing the upcoming royal tour, elaborate some more. There are things that I would call sacrosanct, things that we do not touch, for example, the flying of the Queen's flag when she's in a city. There are many things where traditional protocol is followed.

When I talk of evolution, it's more adapted to the taste of the individuals. We saw this with the young royal couple. We would see in the past a very controlled event, much more controlled and limited in space. The young royal couple really wanted to be involved in the communities. It was a different style of reception.

You can adapt, but the basic tenets always remain. For example, if you're inviting somebody to a state funeral, we are the keeper of the list of precedence. We will follow the list of precedence, as we are the keeper of it in terms of the process. It is the same for the flag of Canada. There are certain ways to display it, in terms of protocol, at an event. The basic rules and tenets remain the same. It is really in the tailoring of the events around the people involved that it often evolves.

[Translation]

Joel, would you like to add anything?

[English]

Mr. Joel Girouard (Acting Director, State Ceremonial and Protocol Directorate, Department of Canadian Heritage): As Nicole mentioned, there are certain things that don't change. I think the best example I can give you of adaptation, because protocol is to make everyone feel comfortable, is last summer during the last royal tour, the individual who had precedence decided that because they were guests, he wanted to give up his precedence and walk into the room after them, just as a mark of courtesy and respect, and to be as welcoming as possible.

That's the sort of adaptation that happens. They're not big steps. There will be guards of honour in the same fashion every time. Those elements remain the same, but some small elements can change, where an individual will decide that they prefer to make their guests feel welcome, or something of that nature.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Next we have Mr. Nantel.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us this morning.

For royal visits, for example, there is clearly a lot of protocol involved. I remember once when someone touched the Queen. That caused quite a problem. I have no doubt that, in that kind of situation, protocol is very much stricter.

Our present study, which is going to occupy the next four meetings of this committee, comes as a result of the protocol that was in place during the late Jack Layton's funeral. A number of people have observed how that state funeral demonstrated a degree of flexibility while keeping up the protocol at the same time. People have often told me about the extent to which they had been struck both by the state funeral and the celebration of the individual's life. It even caused some to think about their own funerals and they were struck by that as well.

At the event, you were able to maintain the required standards while remaining very flexible. I even think that the first pages of the Canadian Heritage site mentions the flexibility. Could you tell us about your contribution to Mr. Layton's funeral?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: You can imagine the flexibility involved. Mr. Layton's family and loved ones had their ideas. They wanted a celebration; they wanted people to come and for it to be accessible.

We were able to keep elements such as the lying in state here in Ottawa, and to make it a time of celebration.

I will let Joel speak to this because he was most directly involved with the funeral.

Mr. Joel Girouard: Let me tell you how it came about. I met with representatives of the family to give them an overview of state funerals on the same day the Prime Minister made the offer that the family accepted. As Nicole mentioned, the half-masting of the flag, the lying in state, the procession and the ceremony can take various forms, according to the family's beliefs and wishes.

The family shared those wishes with us. They said they wanted something a little different. They did not want a traditional ceremony in a traditional place. For funerals, the wishes of the deceased and the family are the most important. So we try to blend in the essential elements. We suggest various scenarios that keep those essential elements, because they are important too. But we leave room for the personal elements to be part of it.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: I remember Mr. LeBlanc's funeral, which was at the other end of the scale. Mr. LeBlanc wanted something simple, in the place where he was born. We were able to maintain the tradition and keep the protocol, but we blended it in with his wish to be buried in the same place as he was born. So it was much smaller and more intimate, but that was the family's wish.

As we have mentioned, protocol is constantly evolving. We uphold tradition, but we certainly have the flexibility needed to adapt to modern society and to technical requirements. There was no television in the past. It makes the events much more accessible, but we have to move with the times.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Clearly, protocol is observed calmly in various situations. That very flexibility means being open to new ideas while still maintaining the protocol.

Is there anything you think needs to be changed? Should any procedures be established? Do you need us to become involved in situations like this?

• (1125)

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: You mentioned flexibility. We have a range of highly developed administrative tools. The rest really depends on good judgment and developing good relationships with people. Does anything need to be changed? I can tell you that, in all the funerals that I have been part of, I have been immensely touched. Funerals really are arranged according to the person's wishes. The tools at our disposal allow us to organize these things in a very short time.

The department's team, which works under the direction of myself and Denis, is made up of people who are passionate about their work. These are very significant events that require Canadians to be part of them. They count for a lot. With my expert team and the tools at our disposal, I think we are pretty well set up.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you very much.

Mr. Denis Racine (Executive Director, Major Events and Celebrations, Department of Canadian Heritage): I would like to add one thing, if I may. If events were the same, always unfolding the same way, we could compare one to another, learn lessons and make changes. As Nicole has said, each event is unique; it is difficult to compare and to know what should have been changed. We do identify good practices at times, things that affect people greatly and that have been well received by Canadians. We keep those practices up our sleeves and try to repeat them when the occasion arises. The unique character of events and royal tours means that it is sometimes difficult to make comparisons.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. Thank you to our witnesses.

It says on the website:

There is no official manual of protocol or ceremonial published by the government of Canada. Protocol, by definition, has to be flexible and adapt to the various players on the political or social stage....

Agreed, but it says:

...an official manual would quickly become the "Protocol Bible" and inflexibility would follow.

You will find that with protocol, in essence it's all over the place. For some reason, I guess when I go to events, I find that people have protocol questions. They always refer to the Government of Canada protocol. I always say there really is no one set protocol for a particular department. Legions have theirs. Defence has theirs. Even the cadets have theirs. Then we have this one.

Is that really the case? Do you think it would be inflexible if we had one manual to say, here is a guideline by which to display...one that encompasses dealing with flags or symbols and ceremony?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: My simple answer is yes. Why? Because there are....

There are books published on protocol, by the way. There are some that provide their works, their studies.

It would become set in people's expectations. They would say, "Okay, this is the A, B, C, D list I have to accomplish in order for this event to be successful." We're saying that's not always the case. You can have element A and Z, and blend it with that, and you can make your event with that. It's not a one recipe, one-size-fits-all. You can't say, "Okay, a state funeral will look like this." That would be inflexible. You can't say, "A royal visit—you can't adapt to that. You have to follow this to the rule." Then we're creating a set of expectations that I think strips away that flexibility that we're talking about that allows people, governments, and persons affected by state funerals to really design and have a say in how it's done.

Of course, you mentioned that National Defence cadets have protocol, because it's part of their doctrine. These are historical institutions that have very long-standing traditions. We would never impose on that. They have manuals about how to conduct a parade—honours, colours, regiments. It's a body of knowledge unto its own and it is important because that's part of our history as well.

If you're asking me if we could have a manual, there have been attempts in the past where we have collated information. But we find very quickly that it's no longer.... It's a useful baseline and guide, but you cannot prescribe any events because they move from the local. People will say they are local, provincial, national, international events, and there are various rules that apply in each of those circumstances. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, for example, has a protocol section because they are dealing with heads of state who come to visit Canada, and they have to adapt to that circumstance.

In our case, what we have and what we can put out publicly, we put on our website. As I said, we do have these administrative templates, but I think it would be kind of.... We don't want to be prescriptive. We want people to follow and to be inspired by what they do, and to make sure that people who are creating events.... We get a lot of calls, as I say. We share. There's an informal network of chiefs of protocol across the country. We share best practices. We discuss. But as I say, it's a constant evolution.

• (1130)

Mr. Scott Simms: I say that because I recall an incident where a small town—a municipality—had wanted to do something to celebrate the last 20 years of missions of the Canadian Forces. That includes Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Libya, and so on and so forth. They were calling me to find out military protocol. They went through Canadian Heritage and that sort of thing. I said they are not inflexible about this. You can call the Legion or call whoever it is. Going through this exercise, I never got the impression that any of it was prescriptive, because it was worded as such. It was all siloed off into different things. Does the Canada flag go before the provincial flag?

For instance, in Newfoundland we always sing the *Ode to Newfoundland*. It's always together with *O Canada*, and sometimes *God Save the Queen*. Is it okay to do that in an official ceremony, to include the *Ode to Newfoundland*? It's what we would call an anthem, but it's not officially a national anthem, per se, God forbid. We just do it by practice.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: He's itching to answer. He's pushed my arm, so I'm going to let him answer.

Mr. Joel Girouard: The short answer to that is it's absolutely okay.

You raised flag protocol, and in terms of half-masting there is a set of federal guidelines that will apply to federal buildings, federal land. Provinces each have their own, and territories as well. Each province and territory will treat their provincial and territorial flag differently from the other provinces or territories, so they need their own set of guidelines. If you look at them across the country, they all fall in line together, and if you put them together they make sense.

One of the examples I can give you is on the half-masting policy. Both the federal government and provincial and territorial governments have, in some way, built in flexibility to their half-masting policies so that they can mirror the other and still be respectful of what's happening in one province, in one territory, while not necessarily changing the whole policy to do it. If there's an issue on half-masting in one area, we'll speak to the chief of protocol in that province or territory. There's a back and forth on things like that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, I think the flag policy was always....

In my final 12 seconds, I'd just like to say I would like to see, as a suggestion, a collated manual, per se, saying up front that it is a guideline that encompasses Defence, the Legion and other things. It would be a one-stop-shop sort of thing for protocol, in my humble suggestion.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: If I may, I know that we have been talking over the last years about linking up on websites, because technology is where it's happening. So we're putting as much information as we can there. When we have a royal visit, if you go there you have all the background, it explains processes and that. We have stand-alone websites.

We are in talks—and I don't know if we've finished it—with DND to hook up through the URL and say, go see DND if it's something pertaining to military honours, because I'm sure DND would probably have volumes with their different ceremonials.

I do think that through the web we have a wonderful opportunity to keep adapting content and providing that type of information.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, and welcome to everyone.

I do have a few questions.

I'm planning a ceremony to present medals to deserving persons in my riding, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for service. I'm wondering what the protocol is with regard to the playing of the Commonwealth anthem and *O Canada*, the order they should be played in.

Does anyone know off the top of their head?

Mr. Joel Girouard: Off the top of my head, I believe you'd play the national anthem first. But depending on the ceremony, people play the national anthem at the beginning and at the end, or only at the beginning, or only at the end. It can vary with the format of your ceremony.

Mr. Terence Young: With regard to the flag, I would like to have the flag of Ontario there, and also the Union Jack. What is the positioning of flags? How important is that?

Mr. Joel Girouard: It depends on how they're displayed, on whether they're hanging on a wall or they're on masts outside. That is all detailed on our website, in terms of the layout. The national flag of Canada always has precedence.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: Yes, if it's on a single pole. It's quite clearly detailed in the flag rules and it tells you how to fly it, and if there's more than one flag, and where the emplacement is.

Mr. Terence Young: Madam Bourget, if a member of the royal family visits Canada on a private visit, do you have any role?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: No. Our sole role is that we make sure that the Privy Council is informed, and that's it.

What happens on a private visit is that an organization will request the presence of a royal member, and they organize it. All the costs, everything associated with those, are really dealt with by the host organization that is receiving.

Mr. Terence Young: The royal family member would have someone with protocol travelling with them, I would assume.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: It would be their own; it would not be ours. As mentioned in my speech and my remarks, when the Governor General invites the royal family on behalf of the Government of Canada, of the Prime Minister, then we are involved because it's an official invitation from the government.

Mr. Terence Young: I've had the honour of meeting Her Majesty twice, once in 1996 in Toronto, and once in 2010 in Toronto. I noticed in 1996—I think it was the first time—she shook hands with the Canadians that she met. Do you know if that was new at that time? Were you involved at that time?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: No, I was not.

Mr. Terence Young: Previously she did not. I think your hand could actually get quite sore and tender if you were shaking hands with hundreds of people a day, but she does that now. She wears gloves. I guess that's some protection.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: She wears the gloves. She has her purse. She has her routine of signalling by movement of the purse when she wants something to end.

She is very organized. It's really amazing to watch this woman, Her Majesty, perform her duties, but again, protocol evolves on the greeting of certain people. When she was on her last visit here she did shake hands. I imagine if she were in a crowd of thousands, she would limit her exposure. In effect, if you're shaking thousands of hands, your hand could get quite a twist.

Mr. Terence Young: Are there instances in Canada where a state funeral was granted for someone who was not a parliamentarian or a vice-regal?

A voice: Yes.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: We have the list. It's a long list.

Mr. Terence Young: In what circumstances might that happen?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: State funerals are for Governors General and former Governors General, Prime Ministers, former Prime Ministers, and the current sitting ministry.

The Prime Minister does have the discretion if it is somebody who was very notable or exceptional. For example, in the case of Mr. Layton, he would not have been offered a state funeral necessarily. The Prime Minister felt it was an important gesture because of the role he played and so he offered to have the funeral. The Prime Minister does have that discretion to recognize citizens who have had a tremendous impact on the country.

•(1140)

Mr. Terence Young: Do you have examples of eminent Canadians who had a state funeral that were not—

Mr. Joel Girouard: Actually, you said parliamentarians. No, there have not been. The only two who have not been Governor General, Prime Minister, or a sitting member of the ministry were Thomas D'Arcy McGee in 1868 and Jack Layton in 2011.

Mr. Terence Young: That's very interesting.

I wanted to know if there was a budget. If someone has had a state funeral and for some reason their grave falls into disrepair, do you have any kind of budget to maintain those if you were called upon to do so?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: No.

Mr. Terence Young: There is no role after the fact.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: No. That would be up to the family. It varies where people are buried. Some have family plots. For others it depends upon the site they choose and that falls to the family afterwards. We are not responsible for the upkeep post-funeral.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

Next we'll move to Mr. Cash.

Now we are in our five-minute rounds.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here. This is a really interesting conversation we're having about important events and the symbolism that we present to Canadians as an expression of who we are as a country. I do really appreciate this. I think it's important here in this committee to acknowledge the professionalism of the department as it pertains to these and so many other things.

All Canadians saw an extremely elegant and professional state funeral for the late Jack Layton. It was organized in a very short period of time. I was there at Nathan Phillips Square for some of the proceedings that occurred just prior to the state funeral. I could see that on the ground these things require professionalism, a deep understanding of the traditions, and an awareness that things happen and that you need to be able to respond to those things.

You've been pretty clear about your take on whether this can be codified in a specific way. In fact, I understand that your sense is that at least as it pertains to your department, the framework is there. What's important here—and correct me if I'm wrong—is that the framework is strong and that it's built on a foundation of precedents. Maybe you can walk me through, from your department's perspective, because you're one of many departments that have protocol frameworks, and then there are, of course, the other levels of government that have protocol, and then there are various other civil society organizations that have protocol.

So if we were to attempt some kind of manual of protocol, how would we proceed with such an attempt?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: When you say manual, would that include all departments and apply to what's happening at the provincial and local levels?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Well, if you just look at—

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: I'm trying to establish some parameters.

Mr. Andrew Cash: The study here is a protocol framework. It's a study on national protocol procedures, so that's pretty vague. It's pretty big.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: It is.

How would we proceed? As I say, we have the framework. We have the templates. It would be labour-intensive to put all this information together and try to distill what is useful for public consumption. We would need to give some thought to presentation and packaging, in the sense that if you're seeking something that is relevant for citizens as a guide, the optic for that is different from what it is for the professional who has to do the job.

We would need to determine the audience, the scope, the format, how we would make it accessible, and some really clear objectives of what we're trying to achieve with this. Those impact the audience. As I say, something that is for citizens to understand, or to know how to do a local event, is very different from something for a professional putting on a state funeral.

My staff would probably say that they work 18 hours a day or around the clock when there is a state funeral. Trying to collate anything would probably kill them off in very quick order. But in trying to bring this all together, I think we would want to make sure it was relevant and that it not only clearly stated what the precedence and traditions were but that it was also flexible.

To answer cold—I would like to think this through—in my view, these are the kinds of questions we would need to think through before considering.

Denis?

•(1145)

Mr. Denis Racine: I was just going to say that the definition of national protocol is quite a challenge. What do we consider to be national? Aboriginal traditions, for example, that we have to take into account at some events would need to be factored in. We have some provincial traditions as well that are very important in some regions of the country. They, too, would have to be treated at the same level as this national protocol exercise that we do.

It's fairly complex. At the federal level we have to play with quite a number of players. There's the military protocol. There's the state protocol. We have to work with both of them. Again, I think we'd need to think it through and see what could be included in such an exercise. Again, it would be fairly complex.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I know it's a tough discussion, but I want to go back to how you stop Canadian traditions from being watered down. Specifically, and I don't want to get too much into it, but in my riding, a police officer was killed in action and a U.S.-type of service was followed because they could not get information on protocol. The flag was folded in a U.S. fashion. All the procedures for that were done following a U.S. service. They could not get the materials they needed. York Region is very large. It has one million people. The police force is very large. York Region is very close to Toronto. To hear that they were unable to get what they needed in time to do this service and had to follow another country's traditions, I find to be very disturbing. How do we stop that from happening?

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: In the specific case you're referring to, I'm somewhat surprised, because my understanding of police forces is that they have traditions within their own forces of how they conduct such ceremonies.

In terms of flag folding and how the ceremony is conducted using the flag, I'm surprised, because our website details even how to fold the Canadian flag, the techniques to it. It's there and it's illustrated—I'm sorry, it isn't on our website yet—but if somebody were to call the department, we have a video that was produced by one of our protocol officers, Paul “Smokie” LeBlanc, a former military gentleman. We do have that knowledge.

Our work in the department is to preserve and promote all Canadian symbols that matter. We try to do it through educational material. We do it through our website. The section of our website that pertains to state ceremonies is the most frequently visited one in the department. Teachers use it a lot. We have guides on national symbols. We have books on symbols. We have *A Crown of Maples*. We just issued another version recently. We have a tremendous amount of information designed to preserve, promote, and create awareness of historical milestones. There are special days.

In the case of the fallen police officer, I'm very surprised that by either looking on the website or calling the department, they were not able to get assistance and answers to their questions.

• (1150)

Mr. Paul Calandra: It may stray into policy, and I understand if you can't answer, but should the federal government be more aggressive in working with our partners at the municipal and provincial levels in creating a national protocol presence? In an instance like this, if something happened, the person would phone somebody at the department and they could get answers almost immediately, as opposed to trying to figure it out, or having to watch a video. In the instance of a fallen officer or a firefighter, usually the last thing people worry about is watching a video or scouring your Internet site. They don't have a lot of time to do that. York Region is a large force, but there are many much smaller forces that wouldn't have the expertise. Is it something that we should consider?

I'm not saying you're not doing a good job of it. It sounds like I'm being critical, but I'm not. Should we pay more attention to making sure our traditions are maintained and that you have the support that you need to make sure across this country that we are....

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: Denis will answer, and it's not....

Your question is a valid one. As I mentioned, we do work closely with the provinces. Every province has a chief of protocol, and

they're usually very experienced people, because they're there to advise the government—the provincial government—on all those matters. Major cities, as I was saying, have chiefs of protocols to deal with those matters.

That network communicates regularly amongst itself in those matters.

Denis?

Mr. Denis Racine: I was going to mention that on many occasions, people seek advice before they have an event, and I think that's the most important rule. It's kind of an informal network of individuals at the federal, provincial, and municipal level that work together. They know each other, and if someone doesn't have an answer, there's kind of a chain of consultations that takes place.

In an instance like that, I think to seek advice or to provide advice is the best solution, to our knowledge, unfortunately.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I think this is where the idea of a manual.... I know you probably cringe, you don't want to hear about a manual, but I think that's kind of sometimes where a manual would help. There are a lot of different protocols for the military as Mr. Simms and everybody was saying, even with Mr. Layton's funeral.

We have changed it, but the basic tenets remain the same. Somehow, I could be wrong but I just feel that somehow that message is not getting back down to other people, be it the provincial or municipal level, and even sometimes ourselves in our own functions in our communities.

Should we not be a bit more arrogant with our traditions, frankly? Should we not at some point in time say that Canada was founded on the basis of two founding peoples, these are the traditions, and if you are going to go down the road of requiring something, think about it now, and when you do make a mistake should we not be in there and say, “Yes, you did something good, but here's how you could have improved on that”?

It might be a policy question; you can answer that.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: On your question, I would say that members of this committee are best placed to judge the level of involvement the government wants to have in matters of protocol and how aggressive...or how much promotion occurs.

We do take our mandate seriously, and with the tools we have, as I said, we do disseminate a lot of information.

I think there's a distinction to be made, and I'm not against a manual of sorts. We do have our various manuals, as I say, because we wouldn't be able to accomplish our work. I think it's important to understand that we are responsible for national protocol of national events.

If you're talking about a state funeral, nobody is going to be doing that except us. A royal visit? Nobody will be doing that except the department.

Those are clearly national protocol elements. When you get into the flag or local ceremonies then it's a different story. That's where the provincial, municipal, or an organization's internal protocol—such as the RCMP, or police forces—each has their own traditions. We cannot impose that on people.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Now we'll move to Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much. I didn't expect a question. I truly appreciate it.

I've been thinking about this, and certainly it seems to me that it's very clear, as you've stated, that every province has its protocol. I can recall as an MPP in Ontario talking to protocol on various occasions. You have gone to every effort to make protocol accessible to people and available so that we can indeed follow positive traditions.

One of the questions that Mr. Calandra asked and I wanted to follow up on, is that in terms of traditions of the founding peoples—the English founders, the French founders, first nations—those are, of course, very important and certainly we have to be respectful there.

In the case of newer traditions, those that have come to us from the many immigrants who have made Canada their home and brought a rich tradition with them, do we incorporate those in any way? I'm thinking back to Jack Layton's funeral and the very touching, and I think, appropriate participation of the Muslim community and various others.

Mrs. Nicole Bourget: Thank you very much. Absolutely, it's weaving in new traditions. And I'm not sure, for example, that 50 years ago you would have seen multi-faith services at funerals. We saw with Mr. Layton it was multi-faith. They had representatives from various communities. We've seen aboriginal ceremonies integrated much more at events over the last few years. So they are woven in, I think, as society evolves, as it broadens.

We are representing that our citizens' makeups are from diverse backgrounds, so they are incorporated in a respectful way that doesn't take away from tradition, but in a way enriches it because it broadens its reach to citizens of those communities who would not normally maybe tune in and say, "That's a funeral. He's English-speaking". By having a broader appeal and having a very varied service, he was responding to constituents, to the various communities that he had worked with.

In that way, that's when we say it's flexible, it's respectful. We always take into account the desires and wishes, and find a way to express that. So yes, absolutely, it's a very important point.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen. Thank you to our witnesses. We are going to suspend now for a minute to allow our witnesses to leave and bring in our next panel.

This was the first day of our study on protocol and your evidence was very helpful. Thank you.

• (1155)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: Okay, we'll get started. We'll continue our study on a review of national protocol procedures.

Welcome. This is a real treat for us to have the Clerk of the House of Commons here. Welcome to Audrey O'Brien and thank you for being here, Madam Clerk.

As well, Eric Janse and Elizabeth Rody are both here. As we know, Eric is the clerk assistant and director general, international and interparliamentary affairs; and Ms. Rody is chief of protocol and director of events. It's wonderful to have you here with us.

We'll begin with opening comments that you might have and then we'll go into our rounds of questioning.

Ms. Audrey O'Brien (Clerk of the House of Commons, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to appear before you today as you embark upon this study.

As you've heard, the protocol requirements of the government for state visits, funerals, and other events are served by the protocol offices at the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The protocol requirements for the Parliament of Canada are the responsibility of the office of parliamentary protocol, headed by Elizabeth Rody, within the international and interparliamentary affairs directorate of the Parliament of Canada, and that's headed by Eric Janse.

I would like to take a few minutes to provide the committee with an overview of the role and mandate of the Protocol Office, our role in the events you're considering, and the differences between federal government protocol and parliamentary protocol.

[*Translation*]

The Office of Parliamentary Protocol is part of the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate of the Parliament of Canada. IIA is the only joint service of Parliament reporting through both clerks to the internal economy committees of both the Senate and the House of Commons.

The chief of protocol reports to the director general of International and Interparliamentary Affairs, Clerk Assistant, Eric Janse, who is on my right. The protocol team is led by the Chief of Protocol for Parliament, Elizabeth Rody, who is on my left.

• (1205)

[*English*]

The office of parliamentary protocol assists the speakers of both Houses in their diplomatic and ceremonial roles, supports parliamentary exchanges and parliamentary associations, organizes parliamentary conferences, and lends expertise and advice on all matters of protocol. This also extends to activities outside of Ottawa, and a good example of this is parliamentary delegations visiting various regions of Canada. A timely example is the work being done for the upcoming 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to be hosted by the Parliament of Canada in Quebec City in October 2012.

The office is also involved as a partner in the delivery of government-sponsored activities that take place in the Parliament Buildings.

Parliamentary protocol ensures that official visits and events for foreign parliamentarians and dignitaries are properly identified, organized, and acted upon; that all visits and events on Parliament Hill are conducted in a manner that befits the dignity and stature of the Parliament of Canada; that visiting dignitaries receive all the diplomatic courtesies in accordance with international protocol practices; that dignitaries, while visiting Parliament, receive a positive image and understanding of the institution; and that guidelines and procedures for parliamentary protocol are developed and maintained based on precedents and knowledge of the institution.

[Translation]

In certain cases the role of the Parliamentary Protocol Office in assisting government visits and events can be minimal, for example in the case of the Prime Minister simply meeting in his Centre Block office a counterpart from another country. In many other cases, however, our involvement is much more significant.

[English]

The vast majority of visits by heads of state, heads of government, or other high-level events occur on Parliament Hill or have a large parliamentary component. The resources required to successfully deliver these activities are not insignificant and they touch on a number of services at the House of Commons and in the Parliament—for example, security services, maintenance, room allocation to name but a few.

[Translation]

Examples of protocol events held on Parliament Hill are welcoming ceremonies of foreign heads of state and government or other high level parliamentarians and international dignitaries; addresses to Parliament; welcoming ceremonies; openings of Parliament; investitures of Governors General; unveiling ceremonies and parliamentary legacy projects, including portraits and windows; state funerals; and commemorations of national events.

[English]

To successfully execute the above mentioned activities, the office of parliamentary protocol partners and collaborates with foreign affairs protocol, state ceremonial at the Department of Canadian Heritage, provincial or territorial offices of protocol, and other government agencies, for example, the Department of National Defence. A recent example of that is Operation MOBILE in Libya and the ceremony to salute that effort.

[Translation]

As a specific example, the overall responsibility for a state funeral lies with the Department of Canadian Heritage. However, when the lying-in-state occurs on Parliament Hill, and it almost invariably does, we play a key role in arranging logistics, greeting VIPs, developing scenarios, coordinating security, and so on.

One of the key challenges is assisting with such events while respecting the fact that Centre Block is a working building with a

specific legislative purpose. This challenge was referred to by Speaker Scheer in a recent ruling.

[English]

I quote the decision of Speaker Scheer:

As we all know, the parliamentary precinct and its buildings exist primarily to support the functions of the legislative branch. The Centre Block in particular, housing as it does the House of Commons and Senate chambers, is a working building where parliamentary proceedings are carried out and where members must be free to perform their duties without interference even when other activities are taking place. Needless to say, these heritage buildings, especially Centre Block, are also ideal venues for all sorts of events and we are all proud to showcase them for our distinguished visitors. However, when activities, such as the visit of the Prime Minister of Israel on March 2 take place, extra care is needed to ensure that competing requirements regarding the use of the buildings and precinct are understood, with due accommodations and with the proper balance.

Different protocol practices are applied when an event is deemed parliamentary in nature or is deemed a state or national event. The parliamentary Protocol Office executes events regularly on Parliament Hill that bring together the executive and the legislative branches, and it ensures that both protocols are incorporated to avoid offence and misunderstandings.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Our protocol office adds the parliamentary components, precedents and practices to events hosted by the executive on Parliament Hill, such as the official welcome of dignitaries by the speakers or the role of party leaders during an address to Parliament. The federal order of precedence does not reflect the composition of the House of Commons—I'm thinking of party standings, for instance—or the leadership role exercised by some members of the House of Commons. For parliamentary events, where the role of the speakers, party leaders, House leaders and whips must be taken into account, party standings will determine precedence and not the federal order of precedence. Thus, for example, seating arrangements for a dinner hosted by the Governor General or the Prime Minister will be different than those for a hospitality event hosted by the Speaker.

[English]

Protocol requires flexibility, common sense, and is negotiated between the different parties involved in crafting an event. Many principles need to be considered when scripting an event: the role of the hosts, the nature of the institution, and the objectives and desired results. Protocol is more art than science. A review of the organization behind the lying in state of the late leader of the New Democratic Party demonstrates that well.

All parties involved—the executive, the legislative, the province, and the City of Toronto—applied and incorporated in their scenarios their particular protocol, the nature of their institutions, but most importantly the wishes of the family, while respecting the overall protocol for state funerals as dictated by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

That is basically the overview of how we fit into things as the office of parliamentary protocol.

[Translation]

I thank committee members for their attention. We will be pleased to answer any questions members may have.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

We will begin our question and answer time with Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here. It's a special treat to have you here today.

I have several questions, first of all, around funerals. When a parliamentarian dies, a member of Parliament or a Senator... I was very close to Senator Dickson. He passed away. I attended his funeral. The Prime Minister attended, as well as some of the members of the opposition.

Who coordinates the role of Parliament in a funeral where it's a parliamentarian who's passed away?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Let me ask Elizabeth to answer that directly.

Ms. Elizabeth Rody (Chief of Protocol and Director of Events, IIA, Parliament of Canada): As Senator Dickson was still a senator, the office of the Black Rod was responsible for assisting parliamentarians at the funeral. It was not a state funeral. The Black Rod's office also assists when former senators pass away, and it assists with the funeral.

In terms of parliamentarians, I must admit I don't know if it's ever happened. I've never been requested to assist in the funeral of a parliamentarian or a sitting parliamentarian. We do work closely when it is, again, a state funeral, such as for Mr. Layton, or things like that.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: The family was very pleased with the communication, the support, and the protocol that went on with that—where someone sat at the funeral—it was very well coordinated. It was done in a very respectful manner, so I wanted to pass that along to you.

As a member of Parliament, I had no idea. How would I find out, as a member of Parliament, if something like that happened again, what the actual protocol is? Would I call your office, Elizabeth? How would I find out?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Yes, and I think you also have a very good point. Perhaps there should have been better coordination between the office of the Black Rod and my office, because I think Mr. Dickson was from your riding and there was a lot of interest by parliamentarians.

I also would like to highlight that in the case of Mr. Layton, we were responsible for the lying in state here on Parliament Hill, but my office also travelled to Toronto, just to lend a hand to parliamentarians, to assist parliamentarians attending the funeral.

We try to collaborate where we can, but I think it's a good point for some—

Mr. Scott Armstrong: For parliamentarians, we would call your office. On the Senate side, it's more the Black Rod.

• (1215)

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Yes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you.

The IPU event in Quebec, as you know, I'm very involved in that. Do you want to just talk about some of the protocol procedures we're going to have in place for that, and the work that's gone into that?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Yes. It's a huge conference. There are a lot of different types of protocols. I think where we have our biggest event will be the inauguration. We would like the Governor General to attend, and there's a whole protocol around his attending an event, so we work very closely with Rideau Hall for that particular event.

In terms of other types of protocols, we just extend the normal kinds of courtesies to parliamentarians. We make sure there are no diplomatic incidents with their arriving in the country, with visas and those types of questions. It really does run pretty much like a committee, all of the sessions. We are bound also by some protocol rules by the international secretariat, so we, again, try to blend all this together. It's not as formal an event as a state event or a visit by a president of country; that being said, it's a huge logistical effort. My team, we do a bit of both. We do protocol and logistics, and we try to make sure all of these elements are brought together so that the Parliament of Canada will have a very successful conference.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Going into a given year, often you're going to have events spring up on you that you have to organize and coordinate. How do you budget? How do you anticipate a budget and where does your budget come from?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: I'll let Mr. Janse answer that one.

Mr. Eric Janse (Clerk Assistant and Director General, International and Interparliamentary Affairs, Parliament of Canada): The international affairs office is a joint directorate, as the clerk mentioned in her opening remarks, so we're resourced, both financially and in terms of human resources, from both the Senate and the House of Commons.

There are a number of different budgets that we manage. Depending on the event, the financing comes from different budgets. If it's something sponsored by the Speakers, it comes from the Speakers' budgets. If it's related to a parliamentary association, it would be the association budget that covers it.

In many cases we assist other departments, and they're the lead departments, so they would assume the costs. For example, when Elizabeth and some of her staff went to Toronto for Mr. Layton's funeral, it was Canadian Heritage that assumed the travel costs for them to go down and assist.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Who makes the final decision on that? Would that be a decision that the clerk makes? Which departments actually...? What I'm saying is that sometimes they could overlap.

Has that ever happened? How do you work that out? Or do you just work that out internally somehow?

Mr. Eric Janse: There are discussions, and we always come to an agreement.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Always.

Mr. Eric Janse: Yes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Okay. That's good.

For events like the Libya event we had, the celebration of that, who coordinates that specifically? Is there a set protocol for those types of events?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: This was a joint effort. Of course this was a desire of the government to have this ceremony, so different groups came together—National Defence, the Privy Council, the working group of parliamentary protocol, Foreign Affairs—and they kind of divided up the work, if you want.

This was led by a general of the Canadian Forces who developed the scenarios. Our part here on the Hill was to offer the services and the logistics, to coordinate security and the attendance of members of Parliament and senators.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: How much time do I have left?

The Chair: One minute.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: The last question I have, then, is that outside of the buildings of Parliament, we have the statues and we have gazebos. For events that are held out there, or the statues themselves, who coordinates whose statue gets put out there? How does that fall in terms of protocol?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: I'm not 100% certain, but I believe that's Canadian Heritage. The statues are managed by the National Capital Commission. I think there's a joint effort there.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: So if someone was looking to do something like that, they would call the Department of Canadian Heritage and find out the protocol for establishing that.

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Yes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Great. Thank you.

That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here. I know that you are very busy people. So, it is greatly appreciated.

You mentioned something very interesting. Actually, we've already heard some witnesses before you, people from Canadian Heritage who arrange protocol events. You spoke about flexibility, but everyone here today knows very well that Parliament is a place where traditions are deeply entrenched, for instance, in how we do things in the House, during votes, and so on. This also applies when we have guests from the provinces or from other countries.

You spoke about the importance of having some flexibility. Given that tradition is very important on Parliament Hill, how do you reconcile these two realities to ensure that you are both flexible and uphold traditions?

● (1220)

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: If I may stray a little bit, Mr. Chair, I'd like to use Mr. Layton's funeral as an example.

At 10:30 a.m. on the day his death was announced, I was in the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Elizabeth was there too, as was a key person from the Prime Minister's Office. We knew that there would be a situation to manage. We didn't know at that point if the Prime Minister would offer a state funeral, as he did, but we know that management would be provided, and we wanted to make sure that we made contact with the key people right away. There was someone from the Prime Minister's Office, since it was the Prime Minister's decision to grant that honour to Mr. Layton, and we wanted to know immediately what it was. We also guessed, naturally, given Mr. Layton's personality, that the party and the family would play a major role in the event.

Right off the bat, we all agreed that, naturally, we would respect the protocol for state funerals, in accordance with Canadian Heritage protocol, while respecting the wishes of the family as much as possible, which was essential. It was important that it all be worthy of the great Canadian that Mr. Layton was, whose life we wanted to honour and celebrate.

Everyone was instantly in agreement that the last thing we wanted was to have each side claim responsibility for the right to make decisions. I'm very proud to speak to you about this cooperation, which even involved the security services of the Senate and the House of Commons. The Senate security services helped the Sergeant-at-Arms and the House security service when necessary to provide enough hours so that people who wanted to could pay their respects to Mr. Layton. We also called on the pages who had worked with Mr. Layton the previous year so that they could direct people to the book of condolences. The day the coffin had to return to Toronto, Andrea McCrady, the carillonneur, prepared a special program in consultation with the family so that the music had a special meaning for the family and for Ms. Chow.

I think that's an example of something we can be very proud of. Of course, we had no notice and had to face fairly special challenges, since things happened at several levels all at once. I think this is a very good example of how things work.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I appreciate your answer. You spoke briefly about cooperating with various groups or services, including those that provide security on the Hill. There are certainly others as well. You also spoke about cooperating with Canadian Heritage for state funerals. I assume that when military celebrations are involved, National Defence plays a role.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I understand that there is good cooperation and there are good agreements, and that there is very little confusion about the division of responsibilities. The way the work is shared among these entities seems to be well-managed, if I can say it like that.

● (1225)

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Yes, I think that it goes very well, overall. I must say—and this is more of a personal comment—that in the case of Mr. Layton's funeral, everyone cared deeply about having it all go well, that it would be a consolation to the family and that it would be an inspiration for Canadians.

To be very frank, in the case of the ceremony for Libya, for example, which was an executive decision, we tried to be very discrete but also quite present to make sure that the executive, in a burst of enthusiasm, didn't hinder the role and independence of the legislative authority, if I may say so.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

It's good to see you again. It's not that we don't get to see you every day, but nonetheless, it's always nice to ask you questions.

I've seen and experienced the protocol for a visiting head of state with the flags. Is there a set way of doing that? We see the flags in the hallways, but what is there beyond that?

I was here when George Bush Jr. came, and we could barely move anywhere. It's a little different, obviously, when the leader of Lithuania shows up, but nonetheless, is there a set program per se for security especially?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: There is a set program, and I'll ask Elizabeth to speak to that directly.

Of course, with the current world in which we live, the security posture is dictated by the risk assessment that is done on the danger posed to the visitor so that, for example—this is perhaps not the time to talk about the Secret Service—the relationships with the Secret Service and the security surrounding the President of the United States are such that they are well known for sort of taking over wherever they go to protect the President. We have managed that on a number of presidential visits.

Similarly, for example, again given the situation in the world, Prime Minister Netanyahu was recently visiting. Again there the security was very major, but I doubt, say, the President of Ireland would necessitate a similar level of security.

We are very flexible on the security front. Our Sergeant-at-Arms and the security services in the Senate work very closely with the RCMP to ensure that the security measures that need to be taken are in place.

With regard to the flag question, Elizabeth...?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Yes.

There are standards of visits so we, in our protocol jargon, will determine if it is a state visit or an official visit. For a state visit, the person is the guest of the Governor General and for an official visit, the person is the guest of the Prime Minister. It is a Speaker-led visit. There are different types of visits for which we have different types of protocol, if you want.

To come back, the question about security is very good. I've been in this business for a long time. Often we get trumped. Security trumps protocol, because we have to adapt to certain realities of the world. So even if a protocol officer decides there would be a great photo op outside, if the Secret Service says, "No way. This is not going to happen", then we have to dress up a different area.

You will hear from my colleagues at Foreign Affairs next week. They are the ones who set the official standards for official visits to Canada. When they call me and say that on Monday we will have the President of Israel visiting, they will say it is a state visit and that he will be here on the invitation of the Governor General. So you will see the streets lined with flags, the Hall of Honour, the red carpet, and military honours at Rideau Hall. These all come into play when we have this level of visit.

• (1230)

Mr. Scott Simms: There is a role for the National Capital Commission too, I gather.

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: They play a role. Public Works now does the flags, but in terms of the question about flexibility, that's also where this plays in with the different standards, and we also have to apply flexibility for certain questions such as security or standards. Certain countries may not actually want our protocol. We offer it, and they may say no, that they would prefer this or that.

The art of protocol is negotiation, so we often find ourselves in a meeting room with colleagues from protocol on their side, and we look at what we are ready to offer and whether they accept it or not. Sometimes they may want more, and we decide if that's acceptable or not.

Mr. Scott Simms: Is there any protocol surrounding a visit by a provincial premier?

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Well, usually, a provincial premier is here at the invitation of the Prime Minister, so it's basically the Prime Minister's Office that will invite him to their office, and security is advised. Unless there's a meeting that would be held on Parliament Hill, then we would—

Mr. Scott Simms: But there's no way of highlighting that the person is here, whether he or she is visiting, or anything like that?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Ordinarily, there might be a recognition. Certainly, we do that for ministers who are more commonly visiting, and in the gallery, but the premier might be as well. Obviously, if he or she were in the House for question period, then there would be recognition afterwards.

Mr. Scott Simms: But outside of that, there really is nothing to recognize the fact that there's...

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: It's more like a visit from family.

Mr. Scott Simms: See, you're far more eloquent than I am.

When a head of state, not a premier, but a head of state visits, is it problematic for tours taking place on the Hill? I think you mentioned that it is a working building per se, but yet it's one of the greatest tourist attractions in central Canada. How do you deal with that? That has to be difficult.

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: Because of the level of security, usually, for a head of state, tours are cancelled for the few hours that we have our visitors. That's the call of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

I don't know, Audrey, if you want to....

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Yes. Ordinarily what would happen is that the tours would be cancelled, because you can't have the tours when you have the welcoming ceremony in the rotunda. The other thing is, if the visitor is still in the building, usually the tours will be cancelled until the visitor exits and goes off to the next event, again, purely as a security measure.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay, that's good.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Please go ahead, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our special guests today for coming.

Protocol is obviously something that Canadians are interested in, and they often get faced with situations that require them to learn a little more about it, and usually on very short notice, as we saw with the situation with the passing of Mr. Layton last year. There was a lot of information out there about what protocol was, but I didn't see it anywhere coming from a reliable source.

As well, Elizabeth, as you know, I've dealt with visiting members of Congress in my role as the chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, and we saw some situations there.

Often there are other things when we go as members of Parliament to events in our ridings. People often talk about the protocol of who's going to speak in what order, and somebody just says it, but nobody actually sees it printed anywhere. I know we've talked a little about this information being available, so maybe there's a way that Canadians can benefit a little bit from that, if we make it more accessible to them. Is that something we might be able to make more accessible to Canadians?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: One of my continuing hopes is that at some point we will be able to free up Elizabeth and her rather astounding corporate memory for protocol events, certainly before she goes into the happy climes of retirement—not that she's thinking of doing that any time soon—and pull together what could be a helpful sort of guidebook or guidelines on the principles of protocol.

I believe the earlier witnesses were talking about that and saying that they were disinclined to have something like this, because people would be then stuck with the written word. I know that this is a danger, but I've been on the flip side of it, whereby you try to tell people it's a convention that the Hall of Honour is used in this or this way, and they say, where is it written down? So it all depends.

I wouldn't like to see us hamstrung by what would seem to be rules that are poured in concrete, but I do think that basic principles, which Elizabeth has told me many times, don't change from one event to another. What you're trying to do is arrange with a kind of invisible courtesy to ensure that everybody who takes part in an event is duly recognized for what they bring to the event and has the attention paid to them that they believe they merit by virtue of their participation, for whatever role they might play. That's where I think the negotiation comes in.

One of the things I've discovered in my time, certainly as deputy clerk when I became deputy clerk in 2000, and since I was named Clerk in 2005, is that the levels of protocol from one country to

another may change quite dramatically. If you accompany the Speaker on a visit abroad, you might find yourself with motorcycle escorts and outriders and what have you; it's all very exciting. Then you think to yourself, oh heavens, when we reciprocate and these people come here, there's going to be some difficulty in explaining to them that we don't do it quite that way. "There are no motorcycle escorts except for very unusual guests, and sadly, you're not one of them."

That's always a bit of a trick. What we try to do there is to say, what we are offering you is this. We want you to feel comfortable in Canada with Canadian norms and Canadian customs, and so this is what we would do for a person of your rank. As I say, it can be a tricky conversation to have, but we have people who are very good at doing it.

• (1235)

Mr. Gordon Brown: Thank you, Madam Clerk, for touching on what goes on in other countries, because that was going to be one of my next questions: how protocol procedures differ in other countries. You've used one example, about motorcycles. Is there anything else that you have witnessed which comes to top of mind and may be different?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Sometimes what happens is, if you have a very different kind of political system—you'll have, for example, the Speaker in some of the other legislatures that we visit, who.... For instance, this is the case in the United States of America, where the Speaker plays such a key role in the governing party that his or her role in the city of Washington is necessarily different from what Speaker Scheer's or Speaker Kinsella's would be here. You have to take that kind of thing into account as well.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Let's talk a little bit about how things may have changed in Canada over the years.

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: As one very good example, I think, of the ways in which we are better off celebrating our own traditions and our own way of doing things, I'll refer to a group that hasn't been meeting for that long—I guess it has been 10 years now. That's the G-8 Speakers of the lower houses. Other G-8 countries, for instance Russia, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom—and certainly the French—have a tremendous, elaborate protocol and all of the architecture and history to go with it and so forth. The last time Canada hosted, Speaker Milliken was the Speaker, and we were discussing how best to go about hosting. Ultimately, we decided that you can't out-Rome the Romans and you can't replicate Paris.

Instead, what he did was decide.... As well, there was the question of the security for Dennis Hastert, the then-Speaker of the House of Representatives. They decided that they would have it in Kingston and would have them staying at, I think it was either the Royal Military College or the Canadian Forces base. That took care of the security side of things. Then they had a tour of the Thousand Islands and whatnot, and Dennis Hastert, for example, was just thrilled to bits, as were the other members, because it was so different from what they were used to, and it was really typically Canadian. And Speaker Milliken got to show off Kingston.

So I think that there are ways in which we shouldn't sell ourselves short because we're not, say, St. Petersburg.

•(1240)

Mr. Gordon Brown: Of course, a tour of the Thousand Islands is always a good thing.

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Absolutely, yes; there you go.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Now we're in our five-minute rounds.

Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here.

It's a little like calling the principal to our office as opposed to what I'm generally used to. It's an honour to have you here, Madam O'Brien, and Madam Rody and Mr. Janse as well.

You mentioned international protocol practices. Are these codified? How do we understand these international protocol practices?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: If you have members, for example, who are participating in an Inter-Parliamentary Union conference, depending where the conference is held they'll be familiar with how the conference takes place, how the IPU handles it, and then there will be elements of the host country that will be taken into consideration.

I think each country has its own norms, and you know them by way of reputation. Elizabeth can perhaps speak to that more directly.

Ms. Elizabeth Rody: International protocol also evolves. We get a lot of our international guidelines from the United Nations, such as, for example, concerning flags. When there's a summit, how do we display flags? UN convention will tell us that it's by alphabetical order in English, unless it's a Francophonie summit. So there are some general guidelines.

As you know, summiteering has become quite the art and is out there a lot, so there are a lot of groups that get together when they put together some of these summits. They have developed some sorts of protocols, and you see these a lot in international meetings. When you're watching on television, you'll always recognize the same type of format—how the flags are displayed, where people are seated, and all of these kinds of protocols.

The fundamentals are always the same because everything comes back to the fact that it's based on precedence. If, at a G-20 summit, you have heads of state and then heads of government, the heads of state will go first, depending on when they were either elected or named to their positions. It's the same thing here in Canada when we have an event—for parliamentarians, who was elected first; who is a member of cabinet, and so on and so forth. These principles always are applied at different levels.

International protocols are very similar. They were all developed many years ago at the Geneva Convention talks, when Europe was deciding on all of their after-war splits. When ambassadors came together, they had to figure out an order. This has been passed along to different offices of protocol, and we have just applied them differently.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thanks.

Madam O'Brien, you mentioned in your opening remarks that protocol is more art than science. You have also said it would be good to have some of the storehouse of knowledge, institutional memory, which apparently Madam Rody has in her brain, down on paper.

Tell me there's a difference between those two statements: the art versus science, and the need to have some of this written. I'm asking because I'd like you to comment on the point of our study here, which is to get potentially a national protocol procedure to better advise provinces and municipalities.

We have a number of different federal organizations, agencies, and offices that have protocols. Is it possible to codify this stuff?

•(1245)

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: When I say it's more art than science and then say it would be kind of nice to have guidelines down, part of that is basically trying to ensure a transfer of knowledge from veterans and a documentation of precedents in what is here. Parliament, understandably enough, is very often an oral culture. You know it's been done like this, but it's not ever written down anywhere.

At the same time I wouldn't like to see something written down that became a kind of commandment that you couldn't deviate from even though it meant that it would be a more successful event—it would answer the needs of the participants, and the circumstances of the moment in a given situation.

It's more a question, I think, of perhaps providing a framework that people can operate within, to say these are the principles you need to take into consideration. Now once they're taken into consideration—so long as you're sure those principles are being respected and this is the usual framework that things operate on so you know you're deviating from it—there's a consensus that you will deviate from it, or you can under the circumstances.

I don't want to throw cold water on a noble endeavour, but I would think it would be very difficult to come up with a national framework for something like this, partly because people are very jealous of their territory, and partly because they know their territory very well and they tend to consider their way of doing things within that territory as sacrosanct. As soon as you get involved in a kind of negotiation, you necessarily water it down—everybody has to put a little water in their wine—and I would just wonder by the time you did that if you would have anything really very meaningful in terms of guidelines.

I see Eric.... Eric is always responsible for keeping me from, like Wile E. Coyote, going off the cliff so I better turn this over to Eric.

Mr. Eric Janse: I wanted to make one quick analogy with parliamentary procedure. There are some parliaments of the world where they have codified specific words that you cannot use in the given chamber at any time.

We in the Parliament of Canada, for instance, have not gone down that route. There are codified explanations contained in the parliamentary procedure and practice of the Standing Orders and like that, but there is no list of words you cannot ever use. It's up to the Speaker to determine on a given day whether the word is non-parliamentary. You could have an instance where one day a word creates a disturbance, and the Speaker will probably get a member to withdraw it. Another day if it's a bit quieter in the House, the same word can be used by a member, and it's not deemed to be non-parliamentarian. That's where the flexibility issue kicks in.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I don't know that we're trying to say—at least I'm not—that all protocols be set in stone and this is just the way it is. My thought is that it's more of a guideline. This is how it has been done in the past and these are perhaps the elements that you should strongly consider.

For instance, when I was first elected it was written down. This is what your first day in the House was going to look like. This is what would happen on a throne speech. The Usher of the Black Rod would come in and pound on the door. You couldn't go past a certain spot in the Senate. It was all written down. The ceremony, it seems to me, has been the same since I was watching it on TV as a kid, and nobody strayed from that. But the ceremony is what it is and I have to assume that it's written down somewhere that's what happens—well, I know it is because I have it.

That's not to say our traditions won't change at some point and maybe the usher will do something different, but until that happens I just feel that sometimes it's nicer to be able to provide better resources. This might be our saying to the government, make it easier for others to get access to this type of information.

I'm going to ask you to stray in a little bit of a different direction because I have you here.

On half-masting the flag, for instance, I'm told on Parliament Hill, Canadian Heritage might say “This is the protocol to half-mast it”, but it's actually Public Works that has to order the flag down because they are in control of the building.

How much do we get in the way of protocol because the Parliament Buildings are controlled by Public Works and not by members of Parliament? Can you answer that? Or do we ever get in the way?

• (1250)

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: When you say “do we”, who is this “we” of which you speak?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Does Public Works get in the way of protocol or the rights of parliamentarians to their building because our buildings that our members are in are actually controlled by a department of the government and not by the two speakers?

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Right. My own feeling is that regardless of who would be in control of the building, somebody would be upset at some point. It's just the nature of the beast.

I think that, generally speaking, parliamentarians and Canadians are well served by the protocol at Public Works. As for the business

of half-mast, I think that's understood and it's respected. It's obviously a case, though, as well, where there's a cut-off point.

At the risk of venturing too far, there was some degree of unhappiness at one point and some degree of concern that the flag wasn't put at half-mast when the news of a casualty in Afghanistan was announced. That raises a whole host of other questions that have nothing to do with paying tribute to the person who's made the ultimate sacrifice, but they have to do with logistics. Does this happen on the day of the funeral? Does it happen when the news arrives? How does that work?

I think that, generally speaking, the rules for the half-masting of the flag are very well respected by Public Works. We don't get involved in that and I wouldn't want to.

Mr. Paul Calandra: This is more of an example.

You know we have two police forces in Centre Block, the Senate police and House police. I know the people who seem to protect the Prime Minister are greatly different outside the building than they are inside the building, and there's protocol obviously around why that happens.

Protocol is not just about where the flag goes, it's about other things, our buildings, which are the—

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: Right. In terms of the security forces, if you trace it right back to its root, we have the fact that it's a bicameral Parliament, and that is the source of many of the reasons that there's a bifurcation.

With regard to policing, the bodyguard for the Prime Minister is a security protocol, if you will. When the Prime Minister enters the building it's the House of Commons security that provides that body, the close bodyguards. That came about, I'm told, because there was a great deal of reluctance at the idea that there should be a national police force present in the building rather than it being people controlled and ultimately in the service of the House of Commons itself.

So there are reasons that things have developed as they have. I would venture to say, by virtue of the training, that the bodyguards who are the immediate detail around the Prime Minister have the same training and are trained to the same level as the RCMP who guard him outside.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Finally, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee. It's lovely to see you here, and I appreciate very much all the wisdom and advice that you are giving.

I want to pick up on something in regard to this need for a manual of “this is what happens”. I wonder, if that were the case, would there also be the danger of it becoming “this is the only possibility”.

What I'm thinking about at this point is the apology to first nations regarding residential schools. I know that at the time there was a great deal of concern because, first of all, how can you give an apology if there is no response, and first nations' leaders were prohibited from responding on the House floor. There were a number of other things: who would be in the chamber, and how would all of the participants be managed? Yet the reality is that it was an incredible and successful event because we broke all the rules and made sure that there was an opportunity for it to be genuine and a very human event.

I wonder if you could comment on that.

• (1255)

Ms. Audrey O'Brien: It's interesting that you would mention that event because I think the event took place at 2:30, and it was 1:45 when Speaker Milliken came into my office with the government House leader to say that there had been a change in plans and they wanted the representatives of the first nations on the floor of the House.

So we went into full improvisational mode, but improvising on the principles that are still sacrosanct. We figured that we wanted people on the floor of the House and that we would do that by having a motion to go into committee of the whole. The motion would provide for the Speaker to actually be chairing, even from the committee of the whole, and the motion would specify that, so we were drafting the motion as we went.

The one hiccup that we ran into was the fact that we only had one microphone that was working and could be passed around—of course, Murphy's Law would follow an O'Brien clerk—and we figured we'd go with that and they would just pass it around. That worked and seemed to be part of the choreography of the thing.

As you said, it was tremendously moving and it was just an absolutely tremendous event for the entire country.

I think that part of me, even though I'd like to see things sort of written down in terms of principles, to pass that on to people.... One of the other things that I find is that certainly the whiter my hair gets, the more I see the generation gaps that don't take 20 years any more, where people just don't seem to be particularly aware of what I would have viewed as basic courtesy. Maybe it's too much texting, who knows; I'm too old. But anyway, all of that is to say that writing it down and then adhering to it slavishly would be a terrible mistake because I think, again, you have to go with the idea of what your objective is. Your objective here is to indicate, with the greatest respect and dignity, the sorrow of the nation because of the circumstances that people were forced to live through. And again, you can't quite throw the rule book out. You have to have it choreographed so that people know what it is they have to do so that is done with due ceremony, if you will.

But I wouldn't like to see flexibility lost, either, because I think that really is the essence, the art.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much. I appreciate that response.

That's it for me.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Thank you, Madam Clerk, for being here with us today, and Mr. Janse, and Ms. Rody. We do appreciate your testimony. This is the first day of our review on national procedures and it's been interesting. We look forward to the rest of our study, and thanks for being a part of it.

Meeting is adjourned.

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