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The Honourable Rob Moore

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• (1200)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and our study on national protocol procedures.

I have a quick note for committee members. Obviously, we had to cancel the first hour. The witnesses scheduled to be here were the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Legion, both based in Ottawa. I understand Mr. Calandra will have a motion later on to deal with hearing from them.

We are going to save the last six minutes for committee business. Mr. Calandra and Mr. Nantel have a couple of items, as does the clerk.

Welcome to our witnesses. We have the City of Ottawa, represented by Cathy Bowles, chief of protocol. From the Government of Manitoba, we have Dwight MacAulay, chief of protocol, executive council. From the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs of Ontario, we have Mary Shenstone. Welcome to all of you.

This is day two of our study. We have had a couple of interesting witnesses, and we're glad to have your participation. We ask that, if it's possible, you keep your remarks to under seven minutes.

We will begin with Cathy Bowles from the City of Ottawa.

Ms. Cathy Bowles (Chief of Protocol, City of Ottawa): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members. Thank you for your invitation to present a municipal perspective on protocol practices as you conduct your review of national protocol procedures.

The Office of Protocol at the City of Ottawa was established in 2001 with the creation of the amalgamated City of Ottawa. The office supports the mayor in his function of representing the city and the citizens of Ottawa. It operates under the leadership of the chief of protocol, reporting to the city clerk and solicitor.

Given that Ottawa, as the national capital of Canada, is the seat of foreign representatives and the host for significant national and international events and activities involving heads of state, royalty, and high-level delegations, the protocol function assumes a critical role in the projection and promotion of the city's image. Protocol-related events are highly visible activities that affect how the city is perceived at the local, national, and international levels.

Although protocol functions were performed by the pre-amalgamated City of Ottawa, a formal office did not exist. With the creation of a larger capital city, the formation of an Office of Protocol was deemed essential. Along with this determination came

the necessity to develop policies and procedures as well as identify the types of events and activities that would be managed by this office.

The Office of Protocol is the office of prime interest in all matters of protocol at the city. As such, it has the responsibility for the development and dissemination of protocol policies and procedures, the organization and management of protocol events and their related activities, and the management of its operation and resources. These responsibilities include planning and implementation of protocol-related events; policy formulation, dissemination, and direction on the use of flags; study tours and visiting delegations; courtesy calls; presentations to council; custody and control over the use of the coat of arms; formulation and issuing of proclamations; management of the protocol gift bank; and the general administrative management of the office.

With the establishment of this office in 2001, an informal consultation process was undertaken with federal, provincial, and municipal protocol offices regarding their protocol practices. During this period of time, in addition to conversations with all levels of government, the websites of both the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade were consulted and continue to be consulted and referenced on a regular basis.

During this exploratory exercise it became apparent that with the exception of specific protocol, such as determining the positioning of flags, styles of address, and orders of precedence, formal protocols pertaining to the planning and execution of events were less prescriptive. The reason for this is to allow flexibility in the planning and execution of specific events. However, over time it became equally apparent that even the more prescribed protocols would have to be modified to reflect municipal practices. For example, within flag protocol, although there would be no deviation from the order in which flags are flown, the directives for the half-masting of flags and the flags that are officially flown at city hall remain at the discretion of the mayor.

Similarly, with the order of precedence, the guidelines provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage are important but are also modified depending on the circumstance. For example, if the mayor is the host of a civic event taking place at City Hall, precedence would be given to the mayor. But if the city is co-hosting an event with the Government of Canada, the Canadian order of precedence would be followed.

Although the City of Ottawa has not been involved in state funerals since amalgamation, it has conducted two lying-in-state ceremonies for former mayors. Elements of state funerals were researched and incorporated with certain elements adapted to reflect these solemn civic events. In these particular instances it was more difficult to locate guidelines in a timely fashion.

The aforementioned are only a few examples of where the guidance and instruction provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage is important, and I would be remiss not to underscore that any protocol procedures established by the Department of Canadian Heritage will always serve as much needed and important reference tools. It must, however, be acknowledged that for governments and organizations outside of the federal jurisdiction, such reference materials will inevitably be modified to reflect policies and practices established by such governments and organizations.

• (1205)

As stated previously, protocol information made available by the Department of Canadian Heritage on its website is helpful and informative. I would respectfully suggest that the current information be expanded to include guidelines for ceremonial events, such as funerals and lying-in-state ceremonies, events that require detailed protocol and must be executed within very stringent timelines. The inclusion of such material would allow access to relevant information in a timely manner.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we'll move to Mary Shenstone.

Ms. Mary Shenstone (Assistant Deputy Minister of International Relations and Chief of Protocol, Office of International Relations and Protocol, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs of Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Standing committee members, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you Ontario's policies and practices with respect to its protocol activities.

It's important for all of us who are tasked with advising our respective decision-makers on such events—or indeed leading them—that we have opportunities to come together to learn and to share best practices. Whether we work at the national, provincial, or municipal level, or with military, police, or emergency response units, what we discuss here has a direct impact on our event planning and support processes.

This is especially true because many of us often end up working closely together on such events as partners, with the shared goal of having the most successful outcome possible. On a state visit, for example, or with the upcoming royal visit, Ontario's office of protocol relies on the support of counterparts from the federal and municipal governments; officials from various safety, security, and military organizations; and venue managers and vendors.

In that context, I thought it would be useful to begin by sharing with you an overview of Ontario's Office of International Relations and Protocol—I'm sorry, I have to use an acronym here—the OIRP.

The OIRP is part of the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, in Cabinet Office, so it's the equivalent of, in terms of administration, the federal Privy Council Office. As part of a central agency, we serve a broad cross-government coordinating function.

We're a relatively small group of operational and policy specialists. Our protocol side is mainly operational, while our international relations specialists focus mainly on policy.

On the protocol side, our coordinators are assigned functionally—i.e., consular and diplomatic corps; government delegations; ceremonies, including royal visits; and VIPs and official visits.

What guides all of us is a shared understanding of protocol and its importance. In essence, in our view, international protocol is the set of generally accepted behaviours in matters of state and diplomacy through written, and unwritten, guidelines. For governments, nations, and provinces, protocol is a system of conventions, procedures, and symbols that nurture and facilitate relationships—political, commercial, social, cultural—between national and, in our case, subnational governments all around the world.

Now, one of the things that sets Ontario's office of protocol apart is simply that, well, we're Ontario. Ontario's multicultural fabric and rich diversity inform almost everything we do. The fact that so many people from around the globe have made this province their home shapes our world and our work almost every day.

Toronto, of course, is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. About 43% of its population was born outside of Canada. We are home to some of the largest diasporas anywhere, and foreign governments everywhere have noticed. That's why, for example, we have a 100-member consular corps in Toronto—which, I am told, is the second-largest consular corps in North America, after New York City—and one of the largest consular corps in the world. Ontario, as you are acutely aware, is also home to Ottawa, and thus home to the ambassadors and high commissioners who comprise the diplomatic corps.

So what does this mean for my OIRP? Well, we serve as a secretariat for the premier, the lieutenant-governor, the speaker, and our ministers across our provincial government to support their international interactions and events with policy advice and protocol services.

We work to raise Ontario's profile and promote the province's international interests, and we do that both at home and abroad.

At home, we arrange meetings for Ontario government ministers and officials with members of the consular and diplomatic corps and with incoming foreign government representatives, including heads of government and state.

Partly because of our large consular corps, partly because of Toronto's proximity to the diplomatic corps here, and partly because of Ontario's strength as a global trade and investment partner, we average well over 200 such visits and meetings every year, the vast majority of which come through our small shop.

We are the window for the world into the Ontario government. In serving this function, we rely a great deal on the assistance and expertise of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and its office of protocol.

As a province, we're guided in our interactions with leaders from foreign national governments by our own national officials, who have responsibility and jurisdiction for that level of political interaction.

Besides organizing and supporting such bilateral meetings, OIRP also plays a key role in organizing and supporting large international events in Ontario. In June last year, for instance, we had the great privilege of hosting the International Indian Film Academy weekend and awards, the so-called Bollywood awards.

● (1210)

Ontario was also chosen a couple of years ago as the destination jurisdiction for the G-8 and G-20 summits. With over 30 national leaders arriving, our protocol staff, working with our colleagues from both the national and municipal governments, were very busy with official greetings of the incoming heads of governments and with several bilateral meetings that were arranged for our premier on the margins of the summit.

We also promote the province's international interests by getting out there beyond our borders. We plan and implement premier-led missions abroad, which in recent years were to China and India, twice each; to Israel and the Middle East; to the United Kingdom and Italy; and of course to the United States. In this we again rely a great deal on the assistance and expertise of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and its embassies, high commissions, and consulates abroad and on all the services they provide to all of us Canadians.

OIRP also coordinates and executes all protocol and ceremonial events and services. These include the installation of the lieutenant-governor, the swearing in of new governments, the unveiling of official portraits, state funerals for former Ontario premiers and lieutenant-governors, the issuing of what are commonly called green passports through the federal government, advice to stakeholders both within and outside government on protocol practices and policies—the half-masting of flags, the Ontario order of precedence—and royal visits.

In July a couple of years ago, as you will remember, Ontario, along with Nova Scotia and Manitoba were privileged to host the visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness. We were responsible for all programming and logistics during the Ontario portion of the visit, and in this we worked very closely as well with the Department of Canadian Heritage and with the Canadian secretary to the Queen, Mr. Kevin MacLeod.

We're also currently working feverishly on the upcoming visit to Canada of their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, in commemoration of Her Majesty the Queen's diamond jubilee.

OIRP also manages the province's special relationships with Jiangsu, which is a province in China, and Baden-Württemberg in Germany. In that context, we leverage our resources by working with colleagues across the Ontario government.

Because there's so much activity across so many sectors, we support and coordinate the signing of memoranda of understanding between Ontario and foreign counterparts. At last count, we had over 250 of such memoranda, of which about half are still active. New ones are being signed regularly.

As with my colleagues here, we also have our jurisdiction's gift banks, housing the unique and, in our case, hand-crafted gifts by Ontario's artists that reflect the province's history, culture, and natural beauty, which the premier and ministers offer to visiting government dignitaries.

Last but not least, our office also manages Ontario's international disaster relief program. This is an activity I'm especially proud of. On more than 40 occasions, the Ontario government has made a financial contribution, usually to the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Red Cross, to assist with relief efforts in disaster zones in countries around the world.

This concludes what I hope is a fairly clear picture of the work our office does. I thank you for your attention, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions you have.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

I shall be pleased to answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Finally, we'll go to Mr. MacAulay.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay (Chief of Protocol, Executive Council, Government of Manitoba): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, everyone.

As the chairman mentioned, I'm the chief of protocol for the Province of Manitoba. I'm probably one of the longer-serving chiefs of protocol in Canada. I've been the chief of protocol there for 14 years. I've served different stripes of government. I've served the Honourable Gary Filmon, the Honourable Gary Doer, past premiers, and currently we have the Honourable Greg Selinger. In my years as chief of protocol for the province of Manitoba I also served for two years as the chief of protocol for the Government of South Australia, working out of Adelaide, for the premier there, the Honourable Mike Rann.

First of all, I want to applaud the federal government and all of you for initiating this approach to better understanding and making better use of protocols on national, provincial, and municipal levels. I hope at the end of the day what we'll have is a start to a process that might foster better relations and understanding of the protocols involved among all three levels of government and a better understanding of the process that all of us work within.

Having said that—and a lot of this will sound like an echo or a ditto to what Mary has just said—let me add that all the provinces and territories, from what I can gather, have what I would describe as a very good relationship with the staff of several federal offices that we count on and deal with on an ongoing basis. The office of His Excellency the Governor General is an office we have dealings with, as well as Canadian Heritage and the Department of Foreign Affairs. We have very good relations with the RCMP and the military, as they're all required because of some of the events and circumstances that we find ourselves in. And as Mary just mentioned, we also have a very good relationship—and I think this is true of all the provinces—with the office of the Canadian secretary to the Queen, Mr. Kevin MacLeod.

On a provincial basis we work directly with the premier; that's who I report to directly. But we also have strong dealings with members of cabinet, the lieutenant-governor, and the speaker of the legislative assembly. Oddly enough, our office—and I think this is true of most of the smaller provinces in Canada—has a very good relationship with opposition MLAs, members of the legislative assembly, as well.

There are many areas in the federal protocol system where all the provinces are really quite grateful for the guidance and advice we receive. There are far more areas of common ground than not. Coming from a smaller province, I can assure you we appreciate and really welcome all the help we can get.

I do know that the current Usher of the Black Rod and the private secretary, who was just mentioned a moment ago, Mr. Kevin MacLeod, started to revise a general protocol manual a few years ago. This was initially done in the 1990s. It was going to be updated by Mr. MacLeod, but then he went on to assume the new duties that he currently has as Usher of the Black Rod. To my knowledge, that manual is still unfinished. I think it's safe to say that all the provinces and territories would appreciate...and in truth—this is especially true of the smaller provinces—we actually need the completion of this manual. As I will reiterate at the end of my presentation, I'd be delighted to play an ongoing support role in this initiative if it's warranted.

I don't think I want to go any further just at the moment without telling you how really pleased I am to be here this morning and to be asked to be part of this process. I'm really flattered that I've been asked to be here today and have a chance to speak to all of you and play a role in today's discussions.

As Mary and Cathy have mentioned... I thought I might just take a moment and tell you about the roles, responsibilities, and duties that are attached to my office as the chief of protocol, because I think it will reflect what actually goes on in the protocol offices in what are called smaller provinces in the country.

We play key organizational roles with respect to all incoming diplomatic visits—for ambassadors and high commissioners and consuls general—and we maintain a strong relationship, almost in a quasi-supervisory capacity, with our consular corps. It's not as large as Ontario's, of course, but there are 25 consular corps members at the moment.

Other areas, such as royal visits, the opening of the House—that's the Speech from the Throne—half-masting of flags throughout the province, books of condolence when required, and most special events where the premier plays a key role also fall, in some capacity, to my office.

The province also has a military liaison position called the Office of the Military Envoy. This office is actually attached to the protocol office to recognize the vital role the military plays in the province, not just from an economic standpoint but in a variety of other areas, including their community support, and in Manitoba's case, the very strong and major role they played in assisting the province in its flood-fighting efforts last year and, previous to that, in 1997.

● (1220)

This office plays what I would describe as a very strong public relations role in ensuring that all levels and branches of the military in Manitoba, including in some capacity cadets, are recognized, respected, and appreciated. I have a couple of examples.

We are in the process of renaming a section of Manitoba Highway 1 as the Highway of Heroes. A lot of provinces have a highway of heroes. This is related to my office and the military envoy position. We're renaming a large section of Manitoba Highway 1 between the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg.

A month from today, we're going to have a diamond jubilee event, which is military-oriented. We're going to have an evening diamond jubilee service of remembrance at Brookside Cemetery in Winnipeg. I don't know if you know this but Winnipeg has the largest military cemetery in Canada. As part of this evening diamond jubilee service, we're going to be placing candles on each of the 12,000-plus graves there. It will be quite dramatic. It's kind of a nice thing to tie in with the diamond jubilee. We hope to have members of the federal, provincial, and municipal governments also on hand for that event.

Of course, there are the not too frequent events, such as state funerals, the swearing in of a new government, and the swearing in of a new lieutenant-governor. As Mary mentioned, similarly in Manitoba, we have the hanging or unveiling of official portraits of past premiers and speakers of the legislative assembly. In fact, next week, former Manitoba premier and current ambassador to Washington, Gary Doer, will unveil his portrait at the Manitoba legislative building. We are involved in that.

We play a key role in many international trade missions led by the premier. In the past few years, we have gone to China, India, Australia, England, Belgium, France, Iceland—Iceland is very important to Manitoba—and the United States as well.

As the chief of protocol, I sit on numerous committees, including one for the diamond jubilee celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen. Both Mary and I are very privileged to be on the national committee for the diamond jubilee. On a provincial basis, I co-chair that committee as well. There is a series of other committees. Manitoba is celebrating its 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers, which was the opening of western Canada, really. We have the War of 1812, which is the key focus in Ontario, but just to the west we have the Selkirk Settlers, which is quite a big event for us. I am playing a role in the initial stages of what the federal government is doing on the sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary, of Canada coming up in 2017. Just on the heels of that will be the 150th anniversary of Manitoba and the 100th anniversary of our legislative building in 2020. Thankfully, that will be past my time as chief of protocol.

As mentioned by Mary, the chief of protocol for Ontario, we also administer gift banks for cabinet ministers, the premier, and so on. These are primarily used for outgoing trade missions and diplomatic visits the premier may receive, for example, ambassadors, high commissioners, and so on.

We have two styles of gifts. One is for key officials. We have gifts in the \$100 to \$150 range. For heads of state, we might go up to \$1,000. That's not often, but it's possible. We have done it in the past. We also have a large bank of lesser gifts, what I would call knick-knacks. People might want 50 or 100 gifts for a school group, committee, convention, or something of that nature. They range from pins and pens to stress toys. We give away a lot of those; it's a sign of the times right now.

We're also the go-to office with regard to ongoing questions from the public and other government departments with respect to protocol, largely on orders of precedence, which I'm going to address momentarily. That is one area in which I'd like to see some resolution.

One other thing we do is our office serves as a secretariat to our provincial order, the Order of Manitoba. We have another, less known honour, the Order of the Buffalo Hunt. It is quite a prestigious award given out by the premier. The protocol office plays a key role in that.

One final point is that the office also plays a role with respect to media relations. I am often the designated spokesperson for different things that are going on where the premier is involved. There's the writing of speeches or news releases, and so on, that might be required for any given event.

•(1225)

This is all done with very few staff. There are just four staff, actually, in my office. We're quite a busy office.

Almost from day one, since I've become the chief of protocol in the province, I'm asked this one question: what is protocol?

This is maybe germane to what we're talking about here today. Aside from describing it, as Mary eloquently did, as a set of guidelines and customs and rules and precedents all coming together, really, to ensure that ceremonies and events have what could be described as continuous order or flow or dignity, I often describe

protocol in much simpler terms as good manners and common sense, and maybe with a hint of flexibility.

This is actually the point I want to address. There's one area of contention that exists, and since we're talking about protocols and so on, I wanted to bring up a couple of points with you. One is the protocol manual that I mentioned earlier. I would certainly hope that can be looked at further in the months ahead. But one area of contention with regard to the provinces and the federal government in the area of protocol deals with the order of precedence. Maybe it could be better stated that the disagreements centre on how the federal order of precedence relates to or interacts with provincial orders of precedence in each province. I don't think there's a month that goes by where there's not a disagreement between communications staff at a provincial level and a federal level with regard to a federal news release or a federal-provincial event. Some of you are probably quite familiar with this point.

I can't really begin to quantify the amount of angst, distrust, and ill-will created by this, and in more practical terms, the amount of staff time that is actually lost or wasted by all provinces, and indeed federal employees, when it comes to federal-provincial events, announcements, and news releases.

By way of background, I thought I'd take a look at maybe how we got to this point today—

The Chair: Mr. MacAulay, I don't want to interrupt you, but we're at about 12 minutes now, and I know you had some specific recommendations.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: I did.

The Chair: I hope those come out in the Q and A, so hint-hint, someone ask about the specific recommendations.

Could you try to wrap in about 30 seconds, because we want to give time for our members to ask questions.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: Sure.

On the order of precedence, one of the key points is this: there is a national order of precedence, but there are also 13 other orders of precedence. The reason is, none of the provinces or territories actually can agree with how the national order of precedence works or interacts with them.

I do have a recommendation on that, and maybe one of you can ask me that question.

Thank you all very much for your time. I'm sorry I went so long.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay, and thank you to all of our witnesses.

Now we'll move into our question and answer period. These are seven-minute rounds, and we'll start with Mr. Calandra.

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

Thank you, witnesses.

It's kind of a difficult topic to ask questions on, in a sense.

I wondering, from all of you, if there is a baseline level of protocol. I can best describe it this way. Being a Catholic, I know that I've been to a lot of funerals, unfortunately, and I know what a Catholic funeral service is going to look like, and I know that the priest is not going to waver from what is written down in how a Catholic service should be performed. After you leave the church, that's a different story. But it's written down, and it is what it is, and there's no wavering from it.

Is there not a baseline level of protocol that exists? If there is not, should it exist? Is it written down somewhere? I know you referenced a manual, but is it not written down somewhere that, yes, we should waver on certain instances, but there is just a level at which we will not move on?

• (1230)

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: Regarding state funerals, you mean?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I mean anything, just protocol in general, be it a funeral, be it...

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: This comes back to one of the points about just common sense, in many respects. Casting things in stone or writing them down, I think, doesn't work all the time. It's good to a point.

There are these orders of precedence I mentioned. On the east coast, the military or the navy gets higher prominence. In Quebec, the Roman Catholic church gets higher prominence. In the western provinces, you have the aboriginal leaders and that kind of stuff.

There is a place for what you're talking about, but it has to be taken with the flexibility to adapt to where you are in the provinces you're in.

As far as there being a hard and fast baseline process for much of this stuff, there technically is, in a sense, but one of the key things we have to adapt to in Manitoba—and I don't want to speak for Cathy or Mary, but this is probably true of all of us—is that you have to adapt to where you are, the circumstances you're in, and the event you're at, and show the common sense required.

I'd like to say that there is a real hard and fast rule for a lot of that stuff, but I haven't really found it. There are some basic principles and basic manners, but beyond that, I think you just have to adapt to the circumstances you're in.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Does anybody else want to respond?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: Well, there are some baselines for it. It depends on what it is. There are baselines for flag-flying and for which flag goes on the left or right. There are baselines. Those are written down. There are baselines for forms of address. Ambassadors are "Your Excellency", your Governor General is "Your Excellency", and the Queen is "Your Majesty". We have those baselines.

In other areas, we need the built-in flexibility because it depends on the individuals, it depends on the day, and it depends on who we're serving. We look at how we've done things before and ask, "Would it still make sense this time?" When you unveil a portrait, it may depend on the individual whose portrait it is and on how they would like to see things unfold.

Certainly, for a funeral it very much depends on the family, on the wishes of the family of the deceased, as to how they would like to

have things unfold. If it is, for instance, as you mentioned, a Catholic service, then it would be within the context of a Catholic service—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes. I was just using that as an example, not that....

Ms. Mary Shenstone: No. I know you were using it as an example, but it would be built in.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I think you mentioned that it would be nice to have some guidelines that you could reference quickly in advance. This is one of the things that spurred us on to talk about this, especially with a fallen officer.

Ms. Cathy Bowles: I can only echo what Mary and Dwight have said. The guidelines are important, and we do use them. We use them all the time.

For instance, on the flying of flags, we would never deviate from the Canadian protocol of how flags are flown. However, when they come down, or when they're brought down to half-mast, it really is at the mayor's discretion. So the guideline is there, but it's tailored.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I was involved in an announcement a couple of years back in Ontario. I won't mention the minister involved, but the Ontario minister refused to participate unless the order of speaking was changed to reflect the elevated stature of a minister over a federal member of Parliament.

There was a half-hour discussion of protocol, apparently, before I arrived. It wasn't done in malice. It wasn't the actual minister who had a problem with it; it was more that the staff were trying to figure this out before we actually got there. When we found out what had happened, we were actually embarrassed for our particular teams. It went off, and it was no big deal, but nobody had this knowledge of who should speak first, and it caused grief.

Do we put enough emphasis on protocol? Is protocol not also a way of protecting tradition? I keep hearing a lot about flexibility, but not enough about protecting tradition.

• (1235)

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: If I may, I'll answer that, because that actually brings up the point that I didn't get to in my notes.

There's a very simple solution, I think, to a lot of this, if it just could be agreed to on a coast-to-coast basis. I did speak to most of the other chiefs of protocol about this. We have talked about this. It's simply a pecking order.

The national order of precedence is a document that is quite encompassing, but when it comes to announcements, new releases, and this type of thing, this is what most, but not all, the chiefs of protocol—I don't want to speak for anybody else, but I have polled many of them—would like to suggest: prime minister first, premier next, federal minister next, followed by provincial minister, and then member of Parliament, MLA, or member of the National Assembly, however they're referred to.

If you adopted a simple process like that, then that's always respecting the federal order first, but it has to be the actual person who is there. If you're there representing the prime minister, that doesn't mean you get the spot of the prime minister. If that were adopted, I think you would be saving staff time all over the country, and quite a lot of angst, really. That's what I wanted to say.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, okay, and if written, not like a big trauma that would cause tons of grief because it's not being flexible.... One—

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Calandra. We're at the seven minutes.

We will go to Mr. Cash.

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

Thanks to all of you for being here.

It's very interesting to get a sense from sort of inside the bunker of how the things that Canadians see on the outside get put together. It's clear that it's complex, but it's also clear that we have incredibly professional people with a rich storehouse of the institutional memory of how things work. That, as we're hearing from witnesses, is as important as just about anything else.

I have a couple of quick questions, but I'm wondering if someone wants to comment on what is more of a general philosophical question that may help us in our study. Is the role of protocol to protect tradition or is it to reflect tradition? Is it to protect it or is it to give voice to what is actually happening in the community and in the culture?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: The role of protocol is to show respect and dignity for those involved and have an established sequence of proceedings so there isn't offence overall.

Protocol changes over time, and it's important that it changes over time. The values of society change, and protocol can adapt and change with them. So the reason to protect tradition, if one is to protect tradition, is to not cause offence to those for whom tradition is important, to the extent that it is important to them.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. MacAulay, you mentioned a manual that the Black Rod had embarked upon. Give us a bit of sense of the parameters of this manual. Is it a manual? Is it a guidebook? Is it prescriptive?

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: It's a compilation of all the different areas that most protocol offices deal with. For example, Mary mentioned the orders of address, how to send a letter to Buckingham Palace, if you're asked to do that, the order of flags at ceremonies and state funerals, and all that kind of stuff. It's a very good set of guidelines. They aren't hard and fast rules; they're really guidelines.

On your earlier point about maintaining respect or reflecting what's going on, when somebody tells me there is precedent for this

because it was done this way last year or the year before, my simple answer is that doesn't mean it was done right; that just means it was done before. So you have to take things in balance. That's why the general demeanour of most of us in this profession is to have quite an even keel. If we didn't have that we'd be jumping out of our windows half the time at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Things have happened in the past that people expect because they were cultural things, and so on. They may have just happened that way and were never right from day one. Our job is to catch them where we can, tweak them a bit, and maybe change them.

• (1240)

Mr. Andrew Cash: Witnesses we had at a past meeting, and two out of the three of you, mentioned that in all matters of protocol there needs to be an element of flexibility. Notwithstanding some of the specific issues Mr. MacAulay is bringing up around order of precedence, when you are looking at all the different protocol offices and all the levels of government—goodness knows, in this country we spend a heck of a lot of time having jurisdictional conversations—is it possible to get the minutiae down in some kind of guide book? If it's possible, is it a good idea?

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: I'd say yes to both. It's certainly possible. As was mentioned earlier, there are baselines or benchmarks for most of this stuff when it comes to some of the elementary things involved, such as flying of flags at events, and so on.

The flexibility comes in recognizing the jurisdiction or province you're in. As I mentioned, in Quebec the Roman Catholic Church has very high prominence.

Mr. Andrew Cash: I understand.

Does anyone else want to weigh in on that question?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: I think it's a question of an overall framework. Getting into all the minutiae may run the risk of overly cementing and therefore removing some of the flexibility. It's difficult for us to deviate from what has been written down. It's human nature. I think it's possible to have an overall framework and general guidelines, but each jurisdiction's details will inevitably change in a few months or a year or two, depending on the circumstances. And the circumstances are always different. No two events are identical. Even if there were a written opus, we would still be calling the various departments in the federal government and each other for advice and examples on the tinkering that I don't think one would realistically write down.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Ms. Bowles.

Ms. Cathy Bowles: I agree with Mary and Dwight.

I also think that a lot of the framework already exists. We certainly reference Canadian Heritage websites. That's our starting point, and then we modify it, depending on our guests, depending on the event, and depending on the occasion. It's a communications tool for making everybody feel comfortable, so we adapt it that way.

Whenever we host anything at City Hall, it's to make people feel comfortable and respected, but we're still respecting the guidelines that have already been established by Canadian Heritage. We don't deviate that much.

What would have helped us when we did a couple of lying-in-state ceremonies—they were both different, so I can only imagine the complexities when you're doing it at a national level—would have been having certain scenarios made available to us for particular events or for particular occasions. That would have helped us.

It's not carved in stone. It may be a particular scenario used for a specific event.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Mr. Simms.

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

Thank you to our guests.

I believe you had a recommendation. Did you get it out there?

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: That was about the Prime Minister being first.

Mr. Scott Simms: It was about the Prime Minister being first. Okay.

This leads me to the next one, which is a question for all of you.

Have you thought about bringing this up with the Council of the Federation or with the intergovernmental affairs ministers in the provinces and with the municipalities as well? Has that been discussed with the federal intergovernmental affairs minister?

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: I haven't discussed it at that level. I can assure you that I did discuss it with the premiers' communications staff and with government communications staff. Then I brought it up with the chief of protocol, and they all thought it was a good, simple process. Maybe it's not the magic bullet, but it would be a good start for a lot of these things.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

It seems simple to me as well, but for some reason, simplicity can get lost in bureaucracy.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: It is simple, yes.

Ms. Mary Shenstone: We have regular meetings of chiefs of protocol, and we have even more regular discussions, through conference calls, for instance, among chiefs of protocol. So we're constantly talking about this sort of thing—how we're doing things and where things are at. At the last meeting of chiefs of protocol, I think the order of precedence was on the agenda without deep discussion. It will probably come up again in the future.

●(1245)

Mr. Scott Simms: I have a question regarding some of the trips you make.

When I was in Israel some time ago, I remember they had a conversation about how the Premier of Ontario had visited at that point. They were talking about a certain project and were hoping to get the Premier of Saskatchewan, I believe it was. Many premiers make trips abroad similar to that.

You say that you liaise with the Department of Foreign Affairs. Obviously, you do. What's the situation when they say the premier wants to do this particular event and Foreign Affairs says it's not really a good idea? Do you push back? Do you say to them, sorry, the premier wants to do it, or do you just say that if Foreign Affairs says don't do it, we don't do it?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: Here's where flexibility comes in. We talk about it. We talk about the reasons. Is it a question of timing? Is it a question of security? Is it a question of availability of players?

Mr. Scott Simms: Do you have flexibility to a great extent?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: We are talking to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on a regular basis. These international missions are very complicated. We are guests in another country. We work very closely with the embassies. We do talk about it, absolutely.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

There are no strict guidelines, per se, but you're certainly well within a certain.... It's a diplomatic way of saying that you'll watch your Ps and Qs, certainly. If Foreign Affairs says it's not a good idea, then you should probably take it as such.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: I've been on several of these. If the ambassador were to say don't do this, we probably wouldn't do it. We'd probably want to know why.

Mr. Scott Simms: I say that because I've noticed that provinces are being engaged more at the international level. An example would be our free trade agreement with Europe. Provinces are signatories, as member states would be in the European Union. Newfoundland has memoranda of understanding with several countries, including Iceland. But you don't have a foreign affairs department, so that puts a lot of strain on you as a province.

I apologize. I don't mean to exclude you from this conversation, but this certainly puts a lot of pressure on you, more so than ever. Do you find that this is the case?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: I think we're all under lots of pressure. I think that's the way life is. I think it's our job to help with that. We certainly act as subnationals. We recognize that we are subnational and we have jurisdiction over that. When we sign and negotiate international memoranda of understanding, for instance, we always run them by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to make sure they don't contravene any international treaty obligations Canada would have.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: There are two sides to that. One is our representative and our ambassador or high commissioner in a different country; the other is that we deal with the ambassadors here. If we're going to another country, we'll liaise with the ambassador here. If we're going to China, for example, we might touch base with the ambassador from China to Canada and get some help on that. Most of us have our own people on the ground in many different nations, and they do a lot of groundwork as well.

Dealing with our embassy in another country is just simply one slice of that pie. It's not that everything flows through the embassy. We'll eventually tell them our program, but we do seek advice on different points. We seek advice on different areas as well. For example, if an ambassador from a country visits the Premier of Manitoba, he might say, "Please come to my country." And the premier might say, "That's a good idea. I'm thinking of going there." That ambassador will start working on things, and then we will tell our ambassador in that nation, "Heads up, we'd like to come over", and we'd ask for any advice and so on. Usually all of these missions have a significant trade aspect as well—if we take over companies that are already doing a lot of substantial business in these countries.

Ms. Mary Shenstone: We find our Canadian ambassadors and consuls general abroad incredibly helpful. They are instrumental in the success of our missions. We very much rely on them, and they are our Canadian officials abroad. So we recognize that they're there to serve us.

• (1250)

Mr. Scott Simms: I've noticed that. I've noticed that many ambassadors or consuls I've spoken with, generally in Europe, where I travel with Canada-Europe, seem to have a pretty good relationship with provinces. Jurisdictions like the Middle East may be a little dicey, and there are certainly some areas you don't want to go to. Now that you've become more proactive in the international field, it's obviously something that has put added pressure on you. Maybe you can expand to deal with that or be more intertwined with Foreign Affairs.

That's only my opinion, of course.

I think that's it for me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Calandra, you're going to be last. Maybe you could keep it to around four minutes so we have time to go into—

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'll ask just one question then. Hopefully it will be just one question.

I keep hearing the word "accommodation" and about making people feel comfortable. That's fine, but I'm wondering why, if that's the ultimate goal of protocol, you call yourself protocol and not simply communications and accommodation experts? What role do you have in helping...or do you feel there is no role? Perhaps this is part of the confusion. Is there no role for protocol officers such as you to actually guarantee that some of the things you're doing fit with the traditions of our founding peoples and are not deviated from, or if they are, that they're deviated from over a very long period of time, so that the ultimate goal should be preservation of historic traditions that helped build this country rather than comfort and accommodation?

If we are looking at protocol, should there be two different versions? Some events are historic and preserved as protocol, but if they are not in that vein, then the communications people should perhaps take over. We don't deviate on how Parliament is opened. It is as it is. We might deviate on whether a person can come into Parliament and feed her newborn baby. That changes. But the ceremonies of opening it don't change.

I got in trouble when I walked between the mace and the Speaker; I didn't know I couldn't do that. I got in trouble when I took a picture in the House; I didn't know I couldn't do that. I got in trouble when I took my jacket off in the House; I didn't know I couldn't do that. That was in the first week of Parliament. I didn't know I couldn't do any of that and I missed the session.

Do you not also see yourselves as having a responsibility not only for accommodating but also for protecting some of the traditions the country was built on?

Mr. Dwight MacAulay: You're absolutely right.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Then how do we do that if we don't write that down and if we're constantly accommodating and looking to appease and comfort people?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: But we do write things down. We have the tradition of respect for our sovereign. We do write that down. We write down how we will address our sovereign and what is acceptable behaviour and what isn't. So we do write a lot of things down. I wouldn't want to give you the impression that we don't write things down. We write a lot of things down. A lot of things are left to flexibility. It's both at the same time. It's flexible, but also much of it is written down in different ways in different settings.

Mr. Paul Calandra: What methods do you use to try to guarantee what you're doing follows an accurate tradition?

You mentioned that it might not have been done right before. Can the government help? Can we do more to help bring about better standards for protocol?

Are we doing enough federally? I know you mentioned our presence, but are there other avenues we can use to bring provinces and municipalities together to make it easier for everybody to understand basic guidelines?

Ms. Mary Shenstone: I think the federal government is doing an excellent job of working with us on these issues. They are sharing with us what is written down, answering questions when we have them, and understanding where it is something that is flexible and something that isn't.

If I were to give you an opinion on where there might be a greater need, I think some very small communities might be interested because they may not know where to turn. I appreciate, as we all have, that faced with different levels of government it can be overwhelming; they're not quite sure whether this is provincial or federal.

•(1255)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Thank you to our witnesses, Ms. Shenstone, Mr. MacAulay, and Ms. Bowles. We really appreciate your input and your suggestions for us as we're conducting this study.

We will suspend for 30 seconds while we go in camera and then into committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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