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Chair

Mr. Pat Martin

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We will convene our meeting.

Welcome to the 43rd meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

We have convened today to continue our ongoing scrutiny of the renovations and associated costs of the parliamentary precinct renovation project, a subject that we have been monitoring for a number of years now. We all look forward to an update. Committee members will be going on a tour of the West Block renovation later today, which I think we'll all be very interested in as well.

It doesn't leave us much time for a presentation, and perhaps one round of questioning from committee members, so we'll begin without delay and introduce our witnesses today.

From the Department of Public Works and Government Services, we have Nancy Chahwan, assistant deputy minister for the parliamentary precinct branch.

Welcome, Assistant Deputy Minister. I wonder if you could introduce anyone else who will be making a presentation. The floor is yours.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Parliamentary Precinct Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, honourable members.

[Translation]

Thank you for inviting us.

[English]

I am here this morning with Mr. Ezio DiMillo, the director general responsible for the major crown projects in the parliamentary precinct.

I appreciate this opportunity to update you on the program to preserve and rehabilitate Canada's historic Parliament Buildings.

I last appeared before this committee in November 2013 to speak specifically about the long-term vision and plan for the parliamentary precinct, also known as the LTVP. Since then, significant progress has been made. I am pleased to report that all major projects continue to be on time and on budget.

I will go into further detail in a moment, but I see that there are new members at the table. Congratulations to all.

Allow me to first provide some background to the LTVP. The LTVP is an overall strategy designed to address four main elements, namely, the deterioration of the buildings, health and safety risks, the shortage of functional space, and evolving security needs.

The LTVP was initially approved in 2001 and then revised in 2007. It is based on five-year programs of work. This approach permits flexibility in planning and implementation, and allows the government to respond to changing priorities. It also permits greater precision in determining costs and schedules.

The LTVP is focused on rehabilitating the three main Parliament Buildings, the West, Centre, and East Blocks, with the objective of getting to Centre Block before building systems are projected to be in critical risk of failure in 2019. The LTVP requires managing a number of interdependent and concurrent projects, as illustrated in the work sequencing map.

Each five year program of work focuses on preparing for the next. The first is focused on relocating parliamentary functions and parliamentary administration, and establishing interim accommodations for members and functions from West Block. The second is focused on rehabilitating the West Block and establishing interim accommodations for members of the Senate. The third will focus mainly on Centre Block.

Between the cranes, tarps, and scaffolding, it may be difficult to see the progress being made. Over and above the work you see today 19 major projects have been completed since 2004, paving the way for the major rehabilitation of the Parliament Buildings currently under way. In the delivery of these projects we have managed to contain costs and save close to \$40 million.

[Translation]

Here are some examples. The food production facility was completed in 2009, six months ahead of schedule and \$6.3 million under budget. The Valour Building, on Sparks Street just east of O'Connor, was completed in 2010 on time and \$6.4 million under budget. And in 2013, we completed enhancements to the perimeter security, including the retractable bollards that now stand at every entry point to Parliament Hill.

[English]

Let me turn now to some of the major projects under way in the order of their expected date of completion.

First would be the transformation of the former Bank of Montreal into the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. This will put to good use a heritage crown asset. The newly constructed annex to the heritage building more than doubles the amount of usable space. The building will house the Confederation Room, which is being permanently relocated from the West Block for ceremonial duties as well as smaller meeting spaces. This facility will be substantially complete in just a couple of weeks.

A short distance down the block, the Wellington Building is about three-quarters finished, and is on track to be completed in 2016. Once rehabilitated, the heritage building will provide accommodation for 70 parliamentary offices and 10 committee rooms. I do invite you to have a look at the pictures if you can.

Work on the West Block, a building that was on the critical list when work began in 2011, has passed the halfway mark to completion, expected in 2017. The result will be a modern facility, fit for Parliament in a modern age. This heritage building is being restored both inside and out.

The interim House of Commons chamber will be constructed in an infill, in what was previously an unused courtyard. The infill will increase the building's functional space by nearly 50% as of 2017. After the House of Commons chamber returns to a rehabilitated Centre Block, we expect that the interim chamber will be converted to committee space.

In conjunction with this work, a new visitor welcome centre is also being constructed between the West and Centre blocks. This will be a new permanent entrance to Parliament that will allow for enhanced security screening of those visiting or working on the Hill.

We are also in the early stages of work on the Government Conference Centre. It will be fitted out for interim use by the Senate. When the Senate moves back to the Centre Block, the Conference Centre will remain in PWGSC's portfolio as a fully functional asset. That project is slated for completion in 2018.

What about East Block?

The rehabilitation of the East Block's oldest exterior wing, known as the 1867 Wing, is also in the very early stages. A seismic design for all of the East Block will be completed, followed by the rehabilitation of the wing's masonry, roofing, and windows. The remainder of the East Block will be worked on following the completion of the Centre Block project.

Again, each one of these projects is on time and on budget. Since 2006, the government has invested \$1.1 billion in the rehabilitation of the parliamentary precinct. An additional \$1.6-billion investment for work through to 2018 has been approved.

We are now focused on planning for the rehabilitation of the Centre Block. In March of this year, we began a consultation process and engaged with architectural, engineering, and construction associations on the future procurement of major contracts. The feedback we received will be used to develop future requests for proposals. We remain on track to empty the building in 2018.

I would be happy to answer questions you may have on the progress to date for Centre Block.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Let me turn now to security on Parliament Hill.

In every project it delivers in the parliamentary precinct, my department works with the RCMP and with the Senate, the House of Commons, and the Library of Parliament to implement their security requirements. The bollards, security cameras and the new guard huts at the main entrance to the Centre Block are examples of such requirements.

We will continue to work with a unified security force and our parliamentary partners in delivering projects that meet their requirements.

[*English*]

Finally, allow me to underline the strong oversight and accountability framework that guides our work. This includes a framework for solid, third-party oversight encompassing contracts, schedules, and costs, as well as quality and design, quarterly and annual reports to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Treasury Board Secretariat, and internal and external audits and evaluations.

Both the Auditor General and the private sector have observed that PWGSC has in place sound project management practices for the rehabilitation of the precinct. An independent audit in 2012 concluded that sound practices, systems, controls, and outputs were in place in its assessment of six major crown projects.

Those who, as all of you do, work every day within the parliamentary precinct do not have to look very hard to appreciate that this is a program of great scope and vast complexity. Let me assure you that the responsibility of preserving these heritage buildings and making sure they realize their full potential is not taken lightly. Safety, security, functionality, and fiscal responsibility are of prime importance. Quality construction and attention to the smallest detail, balanced with sound stewardship decisions, is of the essence. These buildings have been entrusted to us by the generations that came before us. We are making sure they are preserved for the Canadians of tomorrow, and we remain mindful that every dollar spent counts and must be accounted for.

I look forward to demonstrating the intricacies of the LTVP during our tour of the West Block following your questions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chahwan. We look forward to the tour as well.

I think we have time for at least one full round of questioning, and I think we should leave ourselves 10 minutes or so to get geared up and head over so that we can have a full hour at the West Block. So with the committee's agreement, we'll do our regular six spots—one full round of five minutes each.

To begin for the official opposition, the NDP, Mathieu Ravignat.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witness for being here and for your interesting presentation.

Your 2013-14 departmental performance report basically says that the planned spending was \$320.6 million, but the actual spending was \$364.6 million. That's \$44 million over, yet you claim that at most, it was under-budget and on time.

Can you explain that contradiction?

• (1115)

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: This is only an apparent contradiction. The planned spending in the main estimates and the RPP is really just that—a plan. The DPR recognizes the actual spending done and registered at the end of the year. The \$44 million reflects an acceleration of work, mainly on the West Block and the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. So it is still within the approved budget.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: What explains the acceleration of work?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: The initial layout of the expenditures over several fiscal years reflects planning early on for these projects. As we start the work, we work very closely with the construction manager and the designer, the prime consultant, to see what work packages can be done in parallel instead of sequentially. That's part of how we can sometimes accelerate the work from out years to the current year.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: So the projection of being on time wasn't being met. It demanded acceleration of certain types of work, and that incurred more costs. Would that be a fair characterization of what you just said?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: That is a fair question, Mr. Chair, but it is not about accelerating the work to be able to stay on time. Our evaluation of being on time...and by the way, if I can specify, this is not a PWGSC internal estimate. We have third-party costs and schedule experts that help us do that, and we have audits that confirm that.

We are on time per the initial baseline of the project delivery. Accelerating the work may allow us to finish ahead of time, but these projects are very complex, as you can appreciate, so that gives us some float in the schedule.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Sure.

It also says 95% of projects were delivered on time. What 5% wasn't delivered on time?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: I have spoken in my introductory remarks about the six major crown projects and major capital projects. Those are all on time and on budget. The indicators of on time and on budget that you see in the departmental performance report for 2013-14 include other kinds of projects under LTVP, and specifically, what we call recapitalization projects. Those are projects that allow us to accelerate some work, given building condition reports that—

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Let me just be a little bit more specific. I guess what I'm looking for is the projects that are on time. I don't have a lot of time, so if you could just give me that information, that would be great.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Those are four recapitalization projects. One of them is the Canada's Four Corners envelope rehabilitation of the building on the corner of Metcalfe and Sparks. The project scope

had to be revised because of a building condition report showing that other facades needed work. We actually halted that project, and thus it shows "late" for on time. The others are facade and parapet upgrades for the Victoria Building, fire alarm auditability upgrades for the Confederation Building, and finally business continuity of government for the House of Commons.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Have recent security concerns added to future burdens, whether it be budgetary constraints or time constraints? Are you being asked, for example, to change some of your plans in order to make the parliamentary precinct safer while you're doing this?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: We are working very closely with the RCMP and the parliamentary partners to see what recent developments and security requirements are introduced and their impacts on the projects under way and for projects coming up. Depending on the design maturity of those projects, we can reassess the impacts of the new requirements. Some requirements are already being taken into consideration, like, for example, upgrades to the vehicle screening facility at the entrance to the Hill.

The Chair: That concludes your time, Mr. Ravignat. Thank you very much.

Next, for the Conservatives, is Greg Kerr.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here with us today.

I'd like to start by pointing out that no matter what they think of us here who occupy these spaces, Canadians are very proud of the fact that these are their national buildings. It means a lot to them. Part of my hope is that they'll see more public documentation of what goes on and why. People think of the Parliament Buildings. It's not the whole precinct, obviously.

I'd like you to take us through this long journey. Could you encapsulate it from the start, as you see it, to the completion, because it's major, and then perhaps give a little more detail on how you expect it will look? I think every Canadian should have a chance to visit these buildings. They are extraordinary, and they do belong to every Canadian. If you could fill us in a bit on that, I'd appreciate it.

• (1120)

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: This is, indeed, one of our driving principles, as we embarked on the long-term vision and plan. The plan itself respects not only the evolving requirements from the parliamentary partners, but also the need to preserve these heritage buildings for generations to come.

The LTVP, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, is really geared towards starting the rehabilitation of the Centre Block before the building systems are slated to become at critical risk of failure. We have several studies that point out that most of the building systems will be in that state starting in 2019. All the rest of the LTVP is actually a sequencing map to get to that priority. We have started by creating space so we can empty the buildings in the order of priority that the building condition reports were suggesting we should be adopting. What you have seen, for example, is the emptying of the West Block in 2011. That was predicated on creating enough space around the Hill, in the precinct, to be able to accommodate the functions that had to exit the West Block.

The Sir John A. Macdonald building will be ready in just a few weeks, and it will house the room 200 functions. Following that, we will see the completion of the Wellington building in 2016, allowing us to move out the members of Parliament offices from the Centre Block.

The next project to be finalized will be the West Block in 2017, and that will house the chamber functions for the House of Commons. We also need to make sure that we have interim accommodation space and chamber space available for the Senate before 2018. To support that, we are now rehabilitating the government conference centre, which will be ready for 2018. That will house the Senate interim chamber, as well as main offices for the leadership. We will also be working on some lease space.

This is the key sequencing that will allow us to make sure that the Centre Block is empty on time for the start of that rehabilitation project in 2018.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Thank you very much.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: One minute.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Maybe I'll double this in a question.

One point is that I really hope you're doing a lot of documentation of this, because I really want to emphasize that Canadians should go through this experience with us. They don't see it firsthand, but I think they should.

What surprises have you found in the buildings as you went along, which you may want to highlight?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: That's a very interesting question.

On the first part, yes, we are keeping records of the work in pictures and video in some cases, and we are working on ways to make this information available to Canadians. Right now our website provides a lot of information on the projects under way.

Perhaps I can turn to my colleague to tell you about the interesting things we have found in West Block.

Mr. Ezio DiMillo (Director General, Major Crown Projects, Parliamentary Precinct Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): We are doing a number of things to document the processes we go through during the design. We are using laser technology to do videos of the buildings. In the interior we're partnering with Carleton University and Université de

Montréal to do what's called BIM modelling, building information system modelling.

We have found a number of interesting artifacts on the inside of the West Block. We found a letter in the bottom of an elevator shaft some time ago that had been sent by a member of Parliament back in the 1930s or so to a constituent congratulating them on the arrival of a new baby. We also found the odd old tool in the building as well.

• (1125)

The Chair: That's interesting. That's great.

Mr. Blanchette, for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us. It's always nice to hear from them.

The Status Report on Transformational and Major Crown Projects released on December 4, 2014, provides completion dates for certain projects. For instance, the work carried out on the Sir John A. Macdonald Building should be 100% complete. That's obviously not quite the case.

What are your current projections? What does this mean for the budget and the planning of other work? Are there any additional implications?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you very much for the question.

You are referring to the work still being done around the building, but I can assure you that the project will be completed on time. We plan to meet the deadlines. In fact, we believe that the work will be substantially complete within just a few weeks.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: What do you mean by "just a few weeks"?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: We expect everything to be finished by the end of March. By "everything", I mean substantial construction. With this kind of a building, as with any home construction or renovation project, there is always some finishing work to be done afterwards, but the building will be substantially ready for use at the end of March.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: The same status report from December states that the work carried out on the Wellington Building should be 70% complete. Where do things stand right now?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you for the question.

According to our 2014-15 report on plans and priorities, the work should be 70% complete by March 31. I'm happy to tell you that, as of now....

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Will that be the case?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: We will actually be ahead of that projection. We expect the work to be 73% complete by the end of March.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Excellent.

My colleague brought up the security issue. You talked about screening vehicles and anything that is visible.

When it comes to work planning, are there any major elements in terms of facilities?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Yes.

Some work has already been completed, including the installation of surveillance cameras and retractable bollards, which now stand at certain entry points. We are working closely with our partners and the RCMP to ensure that design drawings for any of our future projects include specific security elements. For instance, the visitor reception centre will be completed in 2017. Its specific security elements will include camera surveillance and ballistic protection for the security posts inside.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Great. I have two questions about the conference centre rehabilitation.

The December status report indicates that the project's detailed design would be complete—or nearly complete—by now.

Has that stage really been reached?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: In terms of the design—the architectural drawings for the conference centre—we expected to be at the halfway point, and that's exactly where we are. The project is still in its infancy. It is only 10% complete.

• (1130)

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Okay.

However, as we know, that is a temporary centre, and the building belongs to the federal government.

Have plans already been made for its future use and its transformation?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: There is already a plan in place. I should point out that it will not be done before 2028-2029, at the earliest. Over 95% of the money we are investing will be reused to restore the building's integrity, among other things. We expect it to remain in the Public Works and Government Services portfolio and to once again be converted to be used as a conference venue.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blanchette. That concludes your time.

For the Conservatives, we have Mr. Brad Butt, please.

You have five minutes, Brad.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both of you for being here today.

I think that what's going on around here is very exciting, in that we are wanting to preserve these assets, make them more functional and, obviously, have them open to the public, because as Mr. Kerr said very well, these buildings belong to the Canadian people and are a treasure.

I want to start by asking about the asbestos remediation program and how that is progressing. I understand that it's very delicate, specific work that is obviously for certain very specifically trained individuals. I know that the asbestos removal was a big concern in the rehabilitation of these buildings. Can you comment on how that

program works in conjunction with the overall renovation and rehabilitation of the various buildings?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: We take this very seriously, and we also take the health and safety of the workers on our construction sites very seriously. Before we embark on a rehabilitation project, we do what is called a “designated substance report”. Not only do we look for asbestos, but we make sure that we document every recurrence of a designated substance, including asbestos.

We make sure that the contractors we mandate are responsible for complying with all applicable legislation, whether federal or provincial, and that every worker is certified to do that kind of abatement work. We have an asbestos abatement program that has been completed for the West Block, the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, and the Wellington Building, and the removal and disposal of those materials is done in full compliance with the applicable regulations.

Mr. Brad Butt: The House of Commons is due to expand by 30 additional members after the next general election. Can you comment on two aspects?

First is the renovations, because I don't believe the new chamber in the West Block will be ready to house 338 members of Parliament immediately after the next election. Can you comment on the renovation of the existing chamber to accommodate the extra 30 members and then provide details to us about the new chamber in the West Block and how we will be able to accommodate that many members within that building when it is ready? Second, can you comment on the transition period for moving from one location to the West Block in the next Parliament?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: We will be ready for the 2015 election with the existing chamber. We have been working for a good period of time now with the House of Commons to design additional seats that would be on both sides of the existing chamber. What is planned right now is that the last two rows would be replaced with theatre-style seating and, of course, be equipped with the same technology and facilities the other seats have.

For the new chamber, as you mentioned, we have time to incorporate that requirement within the designs. For the transition period, we are planning this very closely with the House of Commons administration, and we plan to make the transition during the recess of 2017.

• (1135)

Mr. Brad Butt: So when the new chamber is ready in West Block, is that going to be the only use of the West Block, or will there be additional meeting rooms? Will there be offices there, as well, or is West Block just the holdover for the chamber, for the House of Commons, while we're waiting for Centre Block to be redone and obviously have everybody back here in whatever year that will happen? I know we're going to go for a tour and you're probably going to point it out to us, but just so it's on the record, I think it would be nice to know exactly what will be going on in the West Block building.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: I will ask Ezio to answer.

Mr. Ezio DiMillo: Mr. Chair, of course the chamber will be located in the West Block. It will also contain four full committee rooms, as well as all of the back of House spaces that are required for a building of this nature, including shipping and receiving, etc., as well as a number of offices of members of Parliament.

The Chair: That actually wraps up your time.

Mr. Brad Butt: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You used it very well.

Next is the second vice-chair for the Liberal Party, Mr. Gerry Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us.

This is not a small project whatsoever. It's a multi-year project. Would you be able to remind the committee, just to put some context to this, of what the budget is? Just remind the committee what the people of Canada have spent on this on an annual basis over the last, say, five years.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Allow me to find the information. I'm not sure I have the breakdown on an annual basis, but I can provide it to you on a phase basis.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Sure.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Total approvals to date for the LTVP amount to approximately \$3 billion, and as of the end of March of this year, of the current month, we expect to have invested approximately \$1.8 billion of that amount. The period between 2006 and 2015 would amount to \$1.4 billion in investments.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: That's a fair bit of money, but they're obviously beautiful buildings.

Just moving to security issues, I think one of the areas parliamentarians are seized with is the evolving security situation here on Parliament Hill. There wasn't a whole lot of information provided in the initial presentation. But we have seen that, even prior to the tragic incidents of October 22, there have been incidents where security has been reformed. For example, after the scaling of the West Block by Greenpeace we saw an increased presence by the RCMP in cruisers stationed around the parliamentary precinct—especially around the Justice and Confederation buildings, the West Block, East Block, and Centre Block.

How have the plans changed for integrating security infrastructure, not just cameras but actually places to be able to hold security personnel in comfort and with proper vigilance? Would you be able to go through that for us?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: I understand that security is of the utmost importance for the workers, the visitors and, of course, the people using these buildings as their places of work every day.

Public Works and Government Services Canada acts as a service provider, so we do not define the requirements for security. What we do is work very closely in an integrated manner with the RCMP and the parliamentary partners—the House of Commons and the Senate—mainly through the master security planning office for the parliamentary precinct. This is where the discussions about the security requirements are developed and confirmed. Based on

confirmed requirements, this is when Public Works hires security consultants and design consultants to incorporate those into the design and the construction of the project.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thanks very much.

Then answer this question. Since you're not the decision-taker but the implementer, how have the plans changed since October 22, or have they?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: I will turn to Ezio in a minute to talk about the visitor welcome centre and what is already involved in the current design. But to address your question specifically about the changes since October 22, we have been working on upgrades to the vehicle screening facility for the RCMP, and we are still in constant conversation—with no confirmed scope change yet—for the buildings under construction.

• (1140)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: One key area, of course, is visitor screening outside of the building.

I think most security experts would have been able to point out that security screening inside the building creates a substantial risk. Now that's done outside of the building; it's done in a canvas tent.

Is there any plan to create some sort of permanent infrastructure outside of the building to conduct those preliminary or first-tier visitor screenings?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you for pointing that out.

We have worked, for example, on exterior guard huts just outside of Centre Block. That's one example of the work that has been done since October 22.

For the longer term, the visitor welcome complex will be underground and will be outside of the imprint of the buildings. If you look at the plans for phase one of that visitor welcome centre vis-à-vis the West Block, you will see that this is outside of the imprint of the building.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Was this a change that was implemented within the last six months?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: No, this was embedded in the original design.

The Chair: I'm afraid I'll have to interrupt you there, Gerry. Your time has expired.

Then for the Conservatives, our parliamentary secretary for the minister is Chris Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for coming.

This is an exciting project, and something that we've been wanting an update on for some time. It is fascinating to us as well as to most Canadians.

I come from a bit of a construction background, and the project that every contractor fears is a renovation, especially one of a historical building. This is the mother of all renovation projects, and obviously there are unexpected encounters when you tear into a building like this. You will maybe speak a bit to those unexpected encounters. You've already told us that you're still on time. That's a remarkable achievement to run into those things but maintain the timelines that you have.

In addition to that, I'd like you to speak to the importance of maintaining the historical integrity of the buildings. Obviously there's some incredible architectural detailing that has been maintained and renewed. It's an interesting dynamic. The project that's being undertaken obviously has to maintain that historical integrity, but you also have the opportunity to use new materials and take advantage of new energy efficiencies and different things like that.

I'm wondering how you've been able to incorporate all of those priorities into this project. Could you tell us a little more about those things?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you very much for the opportunity to go back to the heritage aspect. I may not have completely answered Mr. Kerr's earlier question on this.

One complexity of the LTVP is that we have to juggle several driving factors, including new functional requirements, the security aspects, the heritage element, and the complexity of working on buildings that were built in times when the blueprints were not necessarily very accurate. You're right that we have run into discoveries that have forced us to rethink the approach for some work packages. Ezio will be able to give you a few examples of that.

Before I turn to Ezio, we adopted an innovative approach when we started to work specifically on the West Block, and that was by hiring a construction manager. That has allowed us to proceed with work packages concurrently. It has allowed us to make sure that the construction manager and the designer were working very closely, hand in hand, early on in the project. That has introduced flexibility in adapting to the realities of these buildings.

Regarding the heritage aspect and energy efficiencies, we work very closely with our internal heritage experts, the heritage conservation directorate. We also work with the federal heritage buildings review office. Their representatives review every design decision that is being made and the progress of the construction to make sure that we are not losing the heritage designation of the buildings in the parliamentary precinct. That does not preclude us from introducing efficiencies in the buildings, whether these be, for example, in water consumption, green roofs, more efficient windows, or more efficient HVAC systems. To the contrary, we are aiming at achieving the equivalent of a LEED silver certification for the buildings.

Ezio will give you some examples on the unexpected surprises.

• (1145)

Mr. Ezio DiMillo: Mr. Chair, the West Block specifically was built in three different building campaigns, and that in itself required that some methodologies we used in construction were different in all three of those campaigns. Once we removed all the surface

finishes from the walls, we did find a number of openings in the brick supporting walls in the building. Those were caused in the 1960s when the West Block was last renovated. Those are being repaired as we speak.

We are also including a number of other elements that will assist in coordinating with the heritage aspect of the building.

One of the challenges, as you mentioned, is that we need to integrate IT, security, and so on into a heritage building—not to mention all the seismic requirements for the structure. These are some of the challenges we are designing in. For example, we're putting in a structured cabling system for IT, security, and so on. That will future-proof the building; it will be flexible so that in the future if changes need to be made, they can be made quite simply.

I mentioned some of the new materials we're adding as well. We're using stainless steel anchors to solidify the wall. Because of the construction of the building, you will see that on site today. There is a requirement for those stainless steel anchors to be inserted so we improve the seismic stability of the building.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. DiMillo.

Thank you, Mr. Warkentin. Your five minutes is up.

Committee members, we've used our time well with concise questions and answers, so we're right on time; in fact, we're a bit ahead of time. The clerk has arranged green buses to take us over from the west door of Centre Block to the construction trailer near the West Block site where we'll be fitted out with the gear we need.

With the one or two minutes we have left, though, I'd like to take the chair's prerogative and ask one question that's been on my mind for a long time.

I too, like Mr. Warkentin, come from a building and construction background; I'm a journeyman carpenter. I used to work for the company, PCL, that is doing the renovation. It's long been my view that the reason everything on Parliament Hill costs ten times as much and takes ten times as long is that there are too many cooks in the kitchen. Unlike other parliamentary precincts in Washington, D.C., or London, England, we've got the Speaker, the House of Commons Administration, the Department of Public Works, the department of Canadian Heritage, the National Capital Commission, all working at cross purposes and, I believe, bogging down the whole operation.

Would you agree, as the parliamentary precinct branch ADM for this project, that we could be a lot more streamlined and arguably save a lot of money if we had one central office like the chief architect of the capital region in Washington, D.C., as has been recommended by a number of blue ribbon panels over the years? We could put that person in charge of one office and get things done so that these things don't drag on for decades.

I just looked it up. At comparable cost, they built the whole McGill University hospital for \$1.3 billion, even with all the graft and corruption that went to Arthur Porter. It's a lot more expensive to build a hospital than it is to even renovate a historic building—a 1,300 bed hospital, which consolidated five other hospitals into one. And that's been done over a couple of years, not a couple of decades.

Could you share your view briefly on whether or not it would have been of benefit to you if you were in charge as the chief architect of the parliamentary precinct to just get the job done?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for a very interesting question.

As we mentioned before, the money that has been invested so far, and will be invested until the end of the long-term vision and plan, is a significant amount. It would probably cost us less today to build a new parliamentary precinct, but because of the symbolism and the importance of the seat of democracy, we have to be very careful that we are maintaining that historic value and symbolic value of these unique buildings. The Centre Block itself will be a very complex and unprecedented project.

• (1150)

The Chair: I'm going to interrupt you.

The only question I had was, would you benefit from a single governance operation instead of those five or six actors getting involved and, I believe, throwing spanners into the works all the time?

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: I believe this was addressed in part by the creation of the parliamentary precinct branch within Public Works.

So we do have one, and I am personally accountable for the delivery of these projects on time and on budget.

You are right to say there are many stakeholders in these projects, not only the parliamentary partners, but also the FHBRO, which we mentioned earlier, and the National Capital Commission, the RCMP, and I can go on. What we have done to address that is to put in place a governance structure where we have all the players sitting at one table to be able to address the common issues. I can tell you that in my tenure in the parliamentary precinct branch, I have seen good efficiencies come out of that common governance.

The Chair: Okay.

Well, thank you very much. We won't go any deeper into that.

Ms. Nancy Chahwan: Thank you.

The Chair: The meeting will be adjourned, and we can reconvene at the west door of Centre Block for our little green bus.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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