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Chair

The Honourable Larry Bagnell

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.)): Good morning. Welcome to the 138th meeting of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This meeting is being televised.

Committee members, there is going to be a vote. Is it okay with you if we carry on until about 10 minutes before the vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Then we'll come back. I think people have a lot of questions, and this is a very important meeting.

I'd really like to thank all of our people for coming. Thank you for agreeing to my request to come. Thank you to the Clerk of the House of Commons for agreeing as well to my request to have this meeting, which I hope will be the beginning of a few. In response to the committee's request, the House administration organized today's briefing on the Centre Block rehabilitation project.

From the House, we are pleased to be joined by Stéphan Aubé, chief information officer; Susan Kulba, senior director and executive architect, real property directorate; and Lisette Comeau, senior architectural strategist, real property directorate. Here from Centrus Architects are Larry Malcic, lead representative, and Duncan Broyd, functional program lead. As well, we have Rob Wright, assistant deputy minister, parliamentary precinct branch, from Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Welcome as well to Jennifer Garrett.

You're with...?

Ms. Jennifer Garrett (Director General, Centre Block Program, Department of Public Works and Government Services): I'm with Public Services.

The Chair: Okay.

I want to mention that in the Hill Times you have in front of you, the Speaker has written an article. I just want to read one quote from it, on why this meeting is so important. It states:

That is why the design process will involve parliamentarians. Their understanding and their perspectives on the workings of Canada's parliamentary democracy are essential to the design. As the caretakers of our parliamentary democracy, they must be engaged throughout the process in a substantial way.

Parliamentarians are not architects or engineers. We wouldn't get into those details, but Parliament wouldn't be here without parliamentarians. That's why it's here. They know from their

experience what works and what doesn't. They have very valuable input. It's very important.

You know, when I choose a home, I get to design it so that it works for the things I need. I don't do the engineering of it or anything. That's why it's very important that we have this meeting and have, as the Speaker mentioned, ongoing participation throughout the process. This is very important. We really appreciate your coming here and having all this expertise so that we know how and when we will be able to continue this process to make sure that our input is instrumental in the design.

I'm not sure how many people will be making opening comments.

Who will do the opening comments?

• (1105)

Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons): Susan Kulba will, Mr. Bagnell.

The Chair: Okay.

There are lots of questions, so if we have to extend...or we'll see what we'll do if we can't get through them all.

You're on. Thank you very much.

Ms. Susan Kulba (Senior Director and Executive Architect, Real Property Directorate, House of Commons): Thank you.

[Translation]

My name is Susan Kulba, and I am the Senior Director and Executive Architect of the House of Commons.

[English]

I'm here today with the team who's responsible for the Centre Block project. I'm under digital services and real property at the House of Commons, led by the CIO, Stéphan Aubé. With me is one of the architects on my team, Lisette Comeau, who's the architectural strategist for heritage.

We have with us also Larry Malcic, who is from Centrus. It's a design consortium that's been hired by PSPC for the Centre Block program. He's the lead representative. Duncan Broyd is the functional program lead representative.

We have Rob Wright, the ADM from PSPC who is responsible for the overall program, and Jennifer Garrett, the director general of PSPC who is responsible for Centre Block.

We thank the committee very much for inviting us here today to hear from you and to engage with you. It's an opportune time in the project. We're in the functional requirement gathering phase of the project, and it's very important to us to have the input from parliamentarians. You represent Canadians all over this great country. We want to hear from you on what's important to be incorporated into the building program of work.

We're here to hear about two aspects. One is on more of a philosophical level: What's important about Canada today, and what would you like to see inspire us in the design of this renovation program? We're also very, very interested in and look forward to hearing your valuable contributions on the functional requirement. How does this building work for you currently? How do you see it working for you in the future? What doesn't work? What will a future parliamentarian be doing in this building, and how can we design for the next 50 years of parliamentary activities?

Essentially, it is not just the renovation of this great historic building. It also involves the addition of a new visitor welcome centre. We're looking at ways of modernizing this building and creating space for the future functions of an evolving Parliament. It's very important to have your opinions and your perspective on how it is to function here.

We look to the original design by Pearson, who really did a fantastic job on this building incorporating the past, the present and the future. It's our opportunity right now to go forward and incorporate a new layer of heritage in these new renovations.

We're here to really seek your feedback, and we will continue to engage. Our Speaker is very interested in having parliamentary engagement all the way through the project, so it's very significant for us to be here and to continue that engagement through the board to parliamentarians throughout the project.

We have been working quite a lot together on this project in terms of establishing the base requirements, but in doing so we've been doing investigative work on the existing building to inform the future project. There have been some enabling projects that are going to allow us to segregate this building and have a better understanding of the physical makeup and the historical fabric of the building.

We've put together a vision statement, and we've had engagement with the Clerk and the Speaker on that. We'll essentially share that with you and then open up for discussion.

The vision, as written today, is this.

[*Translation*]

Centre Block is the home of the nation's federal Parliament. Our vision for the rehabilitation of Centre Block is to safeguard and honour its heritage as the epicentre of Canadian democracy; to support the work of parliamentarians; to accommodate the institution's evolving needs; to enhance the visitor experience; and to modernize the building's infrastructure.

[*English*]

With that, we would like to open up for questions, comments and discussion.

The Chair: Great.

I'd also like to welcome Jennifer Ditchburn, and refer people to an excellent article on Policy Options on this topic.

As you said, form follows function. We certainly hope to provide you the form that we need.

It's ironic that we're having this meeting in the reading room. It was the reading room where the fire started when the original Centre Block burned down.

I think we'll try to do one round of questions with every party, and then we'll maybe open it up to have the open format after that.

• (1110)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): How much time do we have?

The Chair: We have 22 minutes until the bells, so we have about 12 minutes.

We'll start with Mr.—

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Chair, it's so close, we know we can make it in time. Why don't we make it five minutes for each party? That leaves it at 15. We'll still have seven minutes to get to the House.

The Chair: Okay, and we'll come back.

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, everyone, for being here today.

You talked about consulting parliamentarians. I don't understand in terms of how to seek the committee's feedback at this particular point, because we're asking questions and you're answering questions, so it's not necessarily a good mechanism to provide feedback.

On the consultation of parliamentarians, has that happened? Will it happen? What does the timeline look like on that if it hasn't happened?

Ms. Susan Kulba: To date, there has been consultation with the Speaker. We're in the very early phases. The next phase will be obviously to brief you and then go to the board and establish a way for that consultation to happen.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Do we have any timeline for when that will begin or a best guess?

Ms. Susan Kulba: We expect that in January we'll have a plan that we can come back with.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Is there an intention to consult with members of the public? I know, as parliamentarians and staff here at the House of Commons, we sometimes believe this is our workplace, but it belongs to the people of Canada. Is there a plan for consultations with the public?

Ms. Susan Kulba: To date we had expected that parliamentarians would be feeding us back some information and expectations from their constituents. PSPC has indicated that we can do a public consultation if we feel it would be worthwhile.

Mr. Chris Bittle: For many decades there's been a workplace with desks and phones set aside for members of the press gallery. Will that room still exist in Centre Block?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Currently, that is the plan.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Do we know yet, in terms of the size, if a decision has been made whether that will increase, decrease or stay the same?

Ms. Susan Kulba: No. We're way too early in the project for that at this point.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Will consultations happen with the press gallery?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, of course.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Do we have a timetable on that?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Over the next six months, aside from the parliamentary consultations, we will be meeting with all the service providers to Parliament, whether it be House of Commons internal service providers or the press gallery, as an example, gathering their very detailed requirements. We do that on every project. Then we establish what their functional needs are and we work with those user groups throughout the project.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Have any final decisions been made in terms of assignment rooms, office spaces and those types of things?

Ms. Susan Kulba: No, sir.

We're very early in the project. We're still, as we say, gathering what the requirements are. At some point we'll have a good idea of what those requirements are and then we'll need to balance that with all the various priorities of heritage, life safety, and come up with a schematic at that point. We're way before that in the project.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Can you help me out here? The chair mentioned that we're definitely not architects or engineers.

In terms of this process going parallel with construction and/or demolition and renovation work in this building, what's happening in the first six months to a year that is going to allow this consultation period to run parallel to the actual work being carried out in the building?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Once the building closes in January there's a whole decommissioning phase. It's expected to take up to nine months to actually decommission the building, remove all of the House of Commons and Senate infrastructure and furniture and then prepare the building for some of that future construction.

In the meantime, PSPC will also be carrying out intrusive investigations. You've started to see some of that work already. You'll see enclosures in the hallways and various offices. That's why it was important to start moving some of the members out earlier so that we could start the minimal amount of investigative work. Once it's fully vacated we will do the remainder of that investigative work. There are a lot of hazardous substances, and we can't just normally carry out some of that work in a fully occupied building. There's a full amount of work that needs to be done so that we can understand how this building is made. We have information and drawings from the original architects. What we found out already is that it hasn't been built according to those plans so it's very imperative that we do that investigative work to inform things like design, schedule, cost,

etc. We're very early in that process and that's the kind of activity that will be happening in parallel to the requirements gathering.

• (1115)

Mr. Chris Bittle: I appreciate that this place has to be taken apart and put back together like a jigsaw puzzle with many historical features.

At that time in the process does there have to be essentially a final plan so that the rehabilitation and construction can take place in terms of room designation, sizes, allocation and those types of things? I'm also keeping in mind this parallel consultation process.

What's the time frame on that?

Mr. Rob Wright (Assistant Deputy Minister, Parliamentary Precinct Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Maybe we can jump in from Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Thank you for the question.

As Ms. Kulba indicated, 2019 will really be a parallel activity of focusing on getting a full assessment of the condition of the building and on developing the functional program for the building. Those are the two key activities that will allow us to develop a scope, schedule and budget for the facility. That's based on many years of lessons learned and best practices to be able to establish an approach and a design so that real construction can then begin.

Over the next year it will really be those parallel paths of focusing on what the expectations are for Parliament for this facility to deliver to future parliamentarians and what the actual condition of the building is, and then what needs to be done to make sure it will serve parliamentarians and Canadians for the next century.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Does anyone want to take a stab at this on the record in terms of the timing, keeping in mind that we don't know what's behind these walls? In terms of how long we think this is going to take, how many years—plus or minus—are we building into that based on what's behind the walls?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you again for the question.

I think the answer really lies a bit in your question. The critical thing is to complete these parallel activities in terms of what the expectations are of parliamentarians for this building to deliver and what the condition of the building is. At that point, we'll have a real scope and then a schedule and a cost.

Also, of course, we will be doing everything possible to make sure that this building serves the needs of Canadians, that Canadians can be proud of this building and that it serves the needs of parliamentarians into the future, and to balance that with doing this as quickly and in as cost-efficient a manner as possible.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I've heard that one of the chief concerns with this building in particular is how to keep it safe in the event of an earthquake. I've heard—and I don't know if this is true—that in the event of a serious earthquake this would be the most dangerous building in the city of Ottawa to be in.

Can I just ask about earthquake-proofing the building? I gather that it is one of the chief expenses we face, but this is all based on second-hand information.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Part of the project will be seismic upgrading to the building. There is no seismic reinforcing in the current building.

I wouldn't consider this the most unsafe building. We have weathered a fair amount of earthquakes to date, and the building has held fairly well, but it certainly doesn't meet the new codes established from 2011 for earthquake reinforcing. As part of the project, we will be addressing that.

• (1120)

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay. One of the early ideas that has been floated there was.... I think we'd all be interested in getting your feedback going forward on how this issue is dealt with. I did get a chance to see the West Block, as did other members of this committee, and to see how that was being dealt with in terms of attempts to ensure that the stone-and-rubble walls would not bulge out and collapse under their own weight in the event of a seismic event.

I heard that for this building that was not—for reasons I can't explain—an adequate solution and that we needed to find new solutions, which I assume would be much more costly. Is it the case that this building has unique issues based on its size or some other feature that render it particularly difficult to deal with and more complicated than the West Block?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thanks again for the question. Perhaps I'll start off, and then maybe I can hand it over to the architects.

No decisions have been made at this point on how to seismically retrofit the Centre Block. What I will say is that in all of the projects we've undertaken over the past decade, including the Wellington Building, the West Block, as you've referenced, and the Government Conference Centre, seismic retrofitting or seismic upgrading to meet modern building codes has been a key element of the project.

In the West Block, it is a stone masonry. It's a load-bearing stone masonry building that is different from the Centre Block. The Centre Block is one of the first steel structure or steel frame buildings, so the stone is more of a facade. It's a different type of building. The Wellington Building and the Government Conference Centre were different buildings again.

In the case of the West Block, we used approximately 10,000 seismic reinforcing bars to ensure that the three layers of the wall would respond in a harmonious way during a seismic event. In the Government Conference Centre, new shear walls, stairwells and elevator shafts were primarily used for seismic reinforcing. Again, it will probably be a different approach for the Centre Block, because it is a different building.

Mr. Scott Reid: Before we move on to anybody else giving any thoughts on this question, when you say that this is a steel structure on which the stone is primarily a facade, that would suggest to me that it should actually be.... I know that there's more building to deal with here than there is in the West Block, but pound for pound, if you like, or ton for ton, it should be less expensive than it was in the case of the West Block. Is that the case?

Mr. Rob Wright: I think it would be too early to indicate that.

Certainly, the Peace Tower is one of the tallest, slenderest elements that exist on Parliament Hill, so that is a challenge from a seismic reinforcement perspective. You're quite right that the Centre Block is a different building from the West Block, so a different approach will be required.

I don't know if there's anything that Centrus would like to add.

Mr. Duncan Broyd (Functional Program Lead, Centrus Architects): Yes. Thank you.

We have a team of engineers on our team who have been working in this environment on the Hill for many years, so there's a lot of experience there.

We're looking at options. As Rob Wright said, the building is constructed differently from the other buildings on the Hill. It's a combination of steel frame and load-bearing masonry. Part of the investigation is to totally understand how that structure works today and to look at two or three different ways of solving the problem—evaluate that with the construction manager, look at comparative costs, and then be in a position to make some kind of recommendation to move forward.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's helpful.

I have a general question.

We're going to be coming back here, correct?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right. Maybe it's something to mull over and respond to in more detail when we get back.

It seems to me there are essentially three conflicting things that we all want—the fastest possible time to completion, the lowest possible cost and the largest number of features we can each think of on our wish list. Each of us has expressed all three of these contradictory desires at various times. At some point we are going to have to make compromises on some of these things.

In the end, I can foresee a decade from now an outraged Canadian public looking at the total bill for this and saying that some of the features we put in ought not to have been put in, given the costs. Either we or our successors will be faced with dealing with that at the political level. What kind of structure is set up to ensure those compromises that must be made get made by the kind of decision-making apparatus that the Canadian people ultimately would regard as being satisfactory?

I've probably used up almost all of my time. It might be something to mull over and get back to. Maybe I should stop my question now and let people think about this.

• (1125)

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Mr. Bagnell, perhaps I could answer that question.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: The governance for the approval and the review of different scenarios such as that has not been put in place yet. Right now, as we said, we're working at the initial stage to understand the facility.

One of the mandates the Speaker has given us is to put forward some recommendations in terms of establishing a governance model by which we will make these types of decisions. This governance will certainly be engaging the members in terms of both the requirements and recommendations from a cost perspective. These recommendations will also be vetted by the experts so that we can come with recommendations to parliamentarians by leveraging expertise, either from this team or exterior to this team, but this would be vetted through a governance that would be approved by the members and certainly the Board of Internal Economy of the House, and also the Senate.

That model hasn't been established yet, Mr. Reid. We're looking at putting something in place. It's a priority for Mr. Wright and I to come up with a model and some recommendations for the Speaker in early January so that we can move forward with it.

Mr. Scott Reid: We will be in a position, then, when the House resumes at the end of January, to approach our own Speaker and inquire as to where he's headed on it.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Hopefully we'll have a draft to him by that time, sir, and something could be put in place quickly so that we can move forward. That's the goal, sir.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm glad you're including the Board of Internal Economy and this committee, of course—procedures for the House—and then the appropriate bodies in the Senate, as well.

I assume someone has already passed on one of the many inputs that will come from this committee—it's in the minutes of our meeting from last year—which was to look at a potential space for children, either in the courtyard or in or near this particular building.

We have five minutes to vote, so we'd better go.

There's coffee at the back. Chat with the people in the room. We'll be back as soon as the House of Commons allows us.

• (1125) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1145)

The Chair: Welcome back everyone to the 138th meeting of the committee on the Centre Block renovation.

Thanks, Mr. Reid, for the gift to all committee members—Filibuster IPA. Thank you very much.

Mr. Aubé is ready to answer the last question, maybe.

• (1150)

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: We just wanted to make sure that we answered the question on governance, because everyone went to the vote after that.

Is there any follow-up on that? Is everyone okay?

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I might have a follow-up in my turn.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Graham, Mr. Nater and then Ms. Lapointe.

You got on the list first.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I have a question for all of you. Have any of you ever served as an MP or senator?

Have any of you ever worked on the Hill as a staffer of any sort within the precinct? None?

Who is approving the space requirements and allocations for both the Commons and Senate sides of the building? Who makes those decisions?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Typically we work with the whip's office for space allocation based on the policy that was approved at the board.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Who makes the final call?

Ms. Susan Kulba: For the space allocation...?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: For everything, whenever a decision is made somewhere in this building, who makes that final call?

Ms. Susan Kulba: The Board of Internal Economy is our highest level of approval.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Do they approve all the details, or do they have a grander scheme and you are left to some discretion?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes.

When we come to the end of a key milestone, we go to the Board of Internal Economy with a higher-level overview. The staff work on a lot of the detail. We'll share that up to various levels of authority. Sometimes it's the Clerk or sometimes the Speaker, depending on how much detail they actually want to be engaged in.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Who would make the decision on the size of offices, for example—the allocation, floors and surface area?

Would it be the Board of Internal Economy, the Speaker, the Clerk or a staffer?

Ms. Susan Kulba: The current requirements that we use for MP offices were established in the late 1990s. They were approved at the Board of Internal Economy. That has been a standard we've applied in every new renovation to date—the 90 square metres.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: You're talking about the individual offices. I'm talking about the overall offices.

I want to make sure that we don't come up with administrative buildings. I want to make sure that this is our functional members' offices buildings.

Who allocates how much goes to the clerks, to members, to administration, to parking and to the locksmiths? Who does those allocations?

Ms. Susan Kulba: When it comes to members, those requirements were established in "Building the Future" and approved at the board level.

How many units—MP units, they're called—are allocated to an MP, a minister, a leader of the party, etc., were established as a baseline. That's what we have tried to follow where possible. Sometimes the building doesn't always allow for that. We negotiate a compromise if required.

When it comes to the rest of the space allocation within the building, that essentially is approved at the Clerk's level.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Does the same thing apply on the Senate side?

Ms. Susan Kulba: I believe so, but I couldn't speak for them. I'm sorry.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: The building is a joint jurisdiction between the Commons and the Senate, so who would speak to the Senate side of this building on this project?

Ms. Susan Kulba: On this project, the Senate has a parallel team to the House of Commons. They use their governance process for their approvals.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Is there no overlap on this team here with the Senate work?

Ms. Susan Kulba: We work in partnership, but we don't provide services to them.

I'm assuming you're asking how we are, at some point, going to settle on who has what space within the building. That will have to go through a joint governance process.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: What's our percentage of the functional program completion for Centre Block right now?

Ms. Susan Kulba: We're still working on functional program. It's in the early phases. We're currently in receipt of about 50%, but it's not quite there for sure.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: In what year was the Centre Block originally supposed to close? When this plan first started, when was it supposed to close?

Mr. Rob Wright: The Centre Block project is essentially the apex project of the whole long-term vision and plan for the restoration and modernization of the parliamentary precinct. From its very beginning in 2001, the restoration and modernization of the Centre Block has been one of the prime objectives. Many of the other projects that have been carried out—the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, the Wellington Building, and more recently, of course, the West Block, phase one of the visitor welcome centre, and the Government Conference Centre—have really all been about being able to empty the Centre Block to carry this out.

One of the key drivers is the condition of the building, and we continue to do ongoing assessments of the building. From the very beginning, the prime objective has been getting the Centre Block emptied prior to 2019, when it was indicated through the assessments of the building condition that there would be an elevated risk of a building system failure that could impact the operations of Parliament. Of course, a prime objective is to ensure that there's no interruption to the operations of Parliament, so a key

• (1155)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I don't think we're working from the same baseline. What I'm asking about is when it was originally planned. I've been on the Hill for almost a decade, and I have heard that it was originally supposed to close in 1992. I want to know if that's true.

Mr. Rob Wright: I think if you go back in the history, there were several attempted renovations of the Centre Block in the far past, but I wouldn't be able to go into the details of those. I think it is accurate

that there were some planned restoration initiatives over a number of decades that didn't quite get to the point of realization.

One of the key elements is a kind of robust swing-space strategy. The West Block, the Government Conference Centre and the visitor welcome centre provided the ability to empty the building into facilities that would support the operations of Parliament.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Not long after I started on the Hill as a staffer, a piece of rock fell off a ceiling somewhere in the Centre Block; I forget where it was. Public Works told us at the time that it wasn't sure if it could keep the building standing past about 2017. Where is the safety of the building at today?

Mr. Rob Wright: We continue to monitor the building on an ongoing basis. Health and safety is the number one priority, and it is the real reason we've been collectively putting all this effort into making sure that the building is emptied prior to 2019, when we have that assessment that there really is an elevated risk that there could be a building system failure.

Again, all the buildings are different. In the Centre Block, the elevated risks are really around building systems—so mechanical systems or electrical systems—which, if there were a failure, would impact the operations of Parliament. With regard to the West Block, structural stability was the prime, critical factor facing that building.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I'm losing the floor, so I'll come back to you later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Before we go on, I just want to clarify, Ms. Kulba, one of your answers to David. Basically, you said that the final decision on the percentage of rooms for MPs, senators, visitors and media would be made by the boards of internal economy of the House of Commons and the Senate.

Ms. Susan Kulba: That's correct.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I might start by making the comment I made to the chair earlier. Before we broke, he mentioned space for kids here on Parliament Hill. I want to say that I would personally benefit from that because my kids are four, two and newborn right now. By the time we get back here, my grandkids will be using that space. I do want to say that I appreciate that.

I want to follow up a little bit with Monsieur Aubé about the governance structure. I think you mentioned that a draft of that governance would be provided to the Speaker of the House and—I would assume—the Speaker of the Senate in the new year. Is that correct?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: This is what we're aiming for, sir.

Mr. John Nater: Then, would the Speaker have the authority to approve such a plan? Where would that...?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: These are still discussions we are having with PSPC because the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is also accountable for the implementation of these projects. We're looking at establishing a joint governance with PSPC that would engage the minister and also the Speakers.

That's why I'm saying it's still in a draft. We're having dialogue right now, but that hasn't been finalized. It will need to be approved by both sides because, as you know, Mr. Wright has the mandate to actually deliver on these facilities. We want to make sure it's an integrated governance, recognizing that the Speakers also play key roles in the decision-making process.

Mr. John Nater: At some point, then, in the new year, there would be a decision made, ideally, by some form of joint...whether it's the minister with the Speakers making an approval of the governance structure.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: That's what we would be proposing, sir.

Mr. John Nater: Prior to that happening, would this committee see a draft of that governance structure?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: I will take note of that, sir, and we can certainly have a discussion.

Mr. John Nater: Perhaps we, as a committee, can follow up on that in the new year when that happens. As parliamentarians, I think we do have some questions about where the leadership will rest and where the decisions—

• (1200)

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: I take note of that, sir.

Mr. John Nater: I appreciate that.

To our architect friends, thank you for joining us.

I read briefly online some of your past experience, and certainly your team seems exceptionally well versed. Would you have any specific examples of similar projects that members of your team may have undertaken in the past that might be on a similar scale to this project?

Mr. Larry Malcic (Lead Representative, Centrus Architects): Yes, we have. Over the years we've been involved in the restoration and renewal of a number of major government projects. In the U.K., for instance, we worked on the Ministry of Defence main building, which is a building that is grade I listed, the British equivalent listing to Centre Block. That was over a million square feet of complete renovation and renewal, rehabilitation.

We have been involved, in the past, in many other buildings in Whitehall, particularly the complete rehabilitation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is about a million and a half square feet, and we are currently leading the rehabilitation of Buckingham Palace.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you for that.

It was mentioned that the original architectural plans from Mr. Pearson may not have been entirely followed when this building was constructed, as I think many projects in that era may not have been, which always begs the question whether there are going to be known unknowns and unknown knowns that we encounter on this project.

From your past experience, what would be the greatest risk with this project in terms of some of those unknowns that may creep up during this project? Would you hazard a guess?

Mr. Larry Malcic: I would say that, in virtually any building, whether an old building or a new building, there is always some variance between the set of drawings and the building as it's built. I think the risks here are less, in the sense that the building is approximately 100 years old, so there are not the variations in construction quality and technique that you would find in a building built over 300 or 400 years.

However, I think we are doing a very thorough investigation right now, which includes investigations of all sorts of aspects of the building because, particularly in this case, it was an innovative building structure at the time to employ a steel frame and some masonry as well. It's really that interface we're going to be investigating carefully, especially because to create the seismic upgrade will involve very carefully studying how those joints and connections are made.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you very much. I may circle back in a future round. I appreciate that.

I do have one final question for Public Works and Government Services.

At one time, Treasury Board had a project risk management assessment—PCRA. This was required for all major projects undertaken by government departments. I believe each department also had to self-assess its capability. I have two points. Did Public Works and Government Services undertake an internal assessment in terms of what their capacity is to manage such a project, and second and correlated to that, was a PCRA done on this particular project? What was the rating for that assessment and are you confident that Public Works has the capacity to undertake the project?

Mr. Rob Wright: Yes, there was the type of assessment that you referenced made on the Centre Block. It's essentially a four-point scale. Centre Block was rated as a three on that assessment. It's within the department's assessment of its ability to manage projects of that size.

That's a departmental assessment, and within the parliamentary precinct branch the approach on the Centre Block also rests on 10-plus years of restoring and modernizing the buildings within the precinct. As I've mentioned, the West Block, the Government Conference Centre, the Wellington Building, Sir John A. Macdonald and the Library of Parliament would be some of those examples. There's a slew of others, but those are some examples of facilities that would present a variety of the challenges that we will see in the Centre Block. I would say that we are certainly much better positioned taking on this project than if we hadn't cut our teeth and built capacity within industry as well over the past 10 years. There's both been internal capacity and a significant amount of industry capacity that has been built over the past decade-plus of experience.

I would say that we are full and ready for this project.

• (1205)

Mr. John Nater: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I must say that you have surprised me a bit today. As the chair said, when you renovate or build a house, you know in advance where you are going; the architectural plans have been drawn up and you know your needs.

Correct me if I am mistaken but that is not what I'm hearing. It's as though the consultations had not been completed and the planning either.

That surprises me somewhat, all the more so since according to what I think I understood parliamentarians were not consulted. I expect that all of you listen to the program *Découverte* on CBC-Radio-Canada. A month ago, one of its episodes was all about the renovation of Parliament. They said that everything had been planned and that all of the inventory had been done. However, you are now telling us that we are going to see some surprises when we close Parliament. I don't understand.

Can you explain that, Mr. Wright?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you for your question.

As I said, this part of the project has two phases, that is to say the needs of the building and the state the building is currently in.

It is crucial that the walls and ceilings be removed so that we can determine the state of the building. That is impossible to do until it is empty. That was the case also when the work began on the West Block and the Government Conference Centre.

So, we will need to remove the walls and ceilings so that we can determine the current state of that building.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I am still surprised, because in the *Découverte* program they seemed to say that the work had started a very long time ago and that you knew what you would be doing.

So, let me come back to this. When I renovate my house or build a new one, all of my plans are ready before the work begins.

If I understand correctly, this building is going to be shut down before the needs have been established. Do you already know what the senators' and parliamentarians' needs are? Do you know how you are going to divide all of that up?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you for your question.

The state of this building is not exactly like that of a new building, like a house or some other structure. The conditions here are completely different. We need to remove the walls and ceilings, and so on, in order to understand the situation and reduce the risks. That is very important in this type of project.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I am talking about the needs of parliamentarians, when they will come back to the building.

Mr. Rob Wright: This applies to the House of Commons.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Did you consult people about the planning?

Ms. Susan Kulba: No, we have just begun to study parliamentarians' needs. It happens quite frequently with a project of this scope that this is done in parallel. It is also typical to begin by emptying the

building and removing all of the infrastructure while doing research on the needs of parliamentarians and the functional needs.

[*English*]

We'll have a couple of years of design before we're actually at the point where we'll need to start construction in the interiors where those requirements are going to be set. There's a very typical delivery on a fast track. You'll see it in a large building. You'll often see the hole in the ground being dug and the parking garage being poured, and the rest of the building hasn't been designed. It's very common in the complexity of this kind of building where we need to assess the base building requirements. We need to understand what kind of structure there is, what kind of mechanical and electrical there is, all the while gathering the functional requirements, which will feed into the later part of construction.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

We are at the beginning of the project with regard to the needs.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You say that you are at the beginning, but I have heard that the planning was 50% complete and that it was 75% complete with regard to the Senate. Earlier, my colleagues were asking if the parliamentarians' needs are known.

We're trying to build a more family-friendly Parliament. What are you going to do to adapt things in that regard?

You said that the building has been in existence for 100 years.

What are you considering to make the building more family-friendly?

Mr. Wright or Ms. Kulba, I'm all ears.

[*English*]

Ms. Susan Kulba: Essentially, when we say we're at 50% functional program, that's really the base requirements. What we've done to establish that is that we looked at the existing standards that we fitted up in the buildings for members and some of the service groups, so that's like a baseline. We haven't really even done any design. We've just gathered the very minimal baseline requirements and now the consultation process will begin where we'll start to look at more detailed functional requirements. That's why we need to start engaging with you.

In terms of the family-friendly Parliament, we've heard that requirement, even in the existing building. As you know, we have a family room in Centre Block because of those requirements. We will certainly be looking at what kind of future family-friendly requirements will be needed, and we'll be looking to parliamentarians to feed into that functional requirement.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Wright, do you have something to add?

Mr. Rob Wright: No.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay.

I have a very down-to-earth question to ask. A concrete structure is being built beside the West Block.

What is it? No one has been able to tell me.

[English]

Ms. Susan Kulba: As part of the West Block there is no direct loading dock, so the temporary loading dock is being built there in the meantime.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Is it next to the statue of Queen Victoria?

[English]

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: It will be there during the reconstruction. So it will be temporary, but for several years. A strategy will be developed by the Parliamentary Precinct in order to better manage the delivery of construction materials to Parliament Hill.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Fine.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Public Service and Procurement Canada is responsible for the handling of materials for all of the Hill, but in this case, this is a temporary solution we need in order to manage the work at the West Block in an efficient way during its renovation.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Fine, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks very much for your presentation.

As I roll this around in my mind, it seems to me that most of the functions of the building are really not going to change. The basic structural fundamentals—we have the Speaker, the seats, the desks, and the ability to stand up and talk and be recognized—are not going to change even if they add electronic voting.

Parenthetically they may say that any opposition member who votes in favour of that doesn't understand what's going on, because sometimes the only time you're on TV all week is when you vote, so, opposition, keep that in mind. It's great for the government.

Anyway, I can throw these things out because I'm not running again, so I can just toss these things out and they're worth what everybody paid for them.

I am struck by the nature of some things that have changed, which are still fundamental to the building. I am thinking of security. I am thinking of Canadians with disabilities. I am thinking of the media. The nature of the profession is changing and their interaction with this place and with us changes—the rhythm, the approach, the time they can spend.

Family-friendly Parliament was mentioned. I had that on my list. I have to say I was a little concerned when I heard the answer, and I wrote it down: “We'll be looking to Parliament for feedback.” It seems to me that Parliament ought to be the lead on family-friendly. Nobody but nobody understands better what needs to be done to make it family-friendly than do MPs who have family. Now, it may just have been the way you responded, but words matter around here. I would be very disappointed if your thinking was, “Oh, we'll ask parliamentarians for their feedback.” No. It seems to me

parliamentarians should be the lead on family-friendly since it's their families.

What I'd be interested in, Chair, is maybe some thoughts on.... I've criticized the way you're approaching the family-friendly Parliament. Obviously you have a chance to correct that if I'm incorrect, or give me answers that are a little better. I'd be interested in hearing what your approach will be with regard to security. Now that you have put the cart before the horse, in my opinion, when you said that you were going to look for feedback from parliamentarians, I am now listening very carefully regarding the process, as you now have it, for determining what changes need to be made vis-à-vis security, Canadians with disabilities, and the media as examples. What is your process for making those determinations, please?

Thank you.

● (1215)

Ms. Susan Kulba: I apologize for the misuse of words. I certainly didn't intend any disrespect in the use of feedback. The words should actually be “gaining your requirements”.

Essentially we are looking at a consultative process. We don't have it fully ironed out now, because it's related to the governance piece. We will be seeking consultation with parliamentarians on all of those key issues and those detailed functional needs, and then incorporating them into the project through the governance process.

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes. I don't know what the process is. I just leave with you that if I were going to be here in the next Parliament, I'd sure want to be apprised of what the thinking is about the process before it's initiated so that there is an opportunity to say, “Yes, you have it right from our perspective.” We don't know everything, even though we like to think we do. I'd like to hear exactly what your process is going to be, and if there are any changes, let's make them at the very front end rather than in some crisis meeting seven years from now where it will be, “Oh, we forgot to consider that.”

I will just leave with you that I, as one member, if I were here in the next Parliament, would be very interested in receiving a briefing when you have fleshed out what the process for consultation and the process for decision-making are going to be.

Thank you all very much for your presentation.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll have Mr. Graham, Mr. Simms and Ms. Sahota.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Ruby can go first.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): I'm just going to ask a quick question about what Mr. Christopherson was saying, and then I'll pass it over to David because he still has lots of questions.

In terms of the process, we've been talking a lot about going to the Board of Internal Economy in order to get details approved. I believe that is what you mentioned earlier. How about getting that process approved? Who is going to approve the process that you're going to use to gain this feedback and do these consultations? How are we going to know what that process is ahead of time so that, as Mr. Christopherson said, we're okay with that process?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: As you know, we report directly to the Speaker. My first approach would be going to the Speaker's office with the recommendations, then we'd be leveraging the appropriate committees, such as the board or this committee, to seek the approval of the recommended governance that we'd like to put in place for approving requirements or also approving solutions to meet these requirements, from a solutions perspective and a design perspective.

The first step would be going through the Speaker's office, being from the administration, but it would be done also in consultation with PSPC because as you know, any requirements that we set forward will have an impact on cost, risk and implementation also. This would be a joint partnership between PSPC and us. Then we would leverage—

Ms. Ruby Sahota: It seems like we might just get cut out of this whole process because you're going to go to the Speaker and then decide. At what point do parliamentarians get to decide about whether we're okay with that process?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: If you understood this comment from my statement, then I'm sorry, ma'am.

• (1220)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Okay.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: What I'm saying is that you want to get the governance approved through the Speaker's office. Surely, if we're here today, it is because there has been a key requirement from the Speaker to be engaged with parliamentarians. I just can't speak to a solution today because we haven't established it yet. Since we're reporting to the Speaker, I would like for him to have a view of it before we would possibly even come back for discussion with committees, such as here and also the board.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Okay.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: However, we're taking note that there is certainly some interest for this committee and in our coming here. I will actually make sure I relay that back.

The Chair: Thank you. We have that message.

Just following up, Ruby said that it's incumbent on all parties, knowing that process and since they all have members on the Board of Internal Economy, to make sure they communicate with the Speaker that they want to be involved.

Next is Mr. Graham. The advantage of Mr. Graham is that he's been both a staff member and an MP here, so he understands the functional needs of the building very well.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I just want to make a comment, before I ask my question.

I think we'll have to follow this process much more closely than we followed West Block, as PROC and as members. As we move over the next two weeks, I think that we're going to see that it would have been nice to have had this conversation 10 years ago, at least maybe with Joe and things.

Let me start by reminding you all that you are on the record. I would like to hear from you what year we will really move back into Centre Block.

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

It's soon as possible.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Yes, 1992.

Mr. Rob Wright: As I indicated earlier, the next year will be about establishing the scope, which will drive the schedule and the budget for the project, through both the functional programming exercise and the full assessment of the condition of the building. I would say that we're too early in the preliminary phase to speak to the scope, which then flows into creating a budget and a schedule, so it's the functional programming that you have indicated you very much want to be involved in—

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Yes.

Mr. Rob Wright: —which will be a key driver of the timing and the budget.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay.

I do have a specific question.

As Larry mentioned, I've been a staffer and an MP a long time here on the Hill. I know a lot of support staff from my time in staffing. I've heard numerous rumours about an elevator built in West Block that didn't go down far enough, which has resulted in a million dollars of spare parts that can't be used because they're custom made, and that is how we ended up with the temporary loading dock to CBUS, behind the Confederation Building.

Can you confirm or deny this? Is there any truth to this?

Mr. Rob Wright: I'm not aware of any truth to that. No.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay. That's good.

When was the loading dock outside of the government lobby planned to be built because I noticed this concrete structure that materialized recently?

Mr. Rob Wright: Perhaps the House can speak to that as well.

The temporary loading dock that is there now was not part of the initial scope of the West Block. It's part of the broader long-term vision and plan. There are plans around a permanent materiel handling facility on Parliament Hill, which is not in place yet, so a temporary solution was required.

Currently, there's a loading dock in the Centre Block that can be used until the Centre Block is fully decommissioned. As you heard, it will take several months, so the temporary loading dock has to be in place by the time the Centre Block is fully decommissioned. Until that point, the loading dock that is currently at the Centre Block serves the West Block appropriately.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: There's no loading dock whatsoever built into West Block as yet in this construction. It was always planned to have loading done through Centre Block.

Mr. Rob Wright: There was a plan to have a long-term material management and loading dock facility aligned with the opening of the West Block, which did not occur. There were some adjustments to the long-term vision and plan, so we shifted to a temporary solution.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: The long-term vision and plan had planned for a loading dock and they dropped the plan for a loading dock.

Mr. Rob Wright: To the west of the West Block was the original plan, yes.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Right. That's good to know.

What was the consultation with members and staff on the construction of West Block as we now know it? Can anybody speak to the process and the involvement of members in that process?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Again, for the West Block, our consultation was through the Board of Internal Economy but at a very high level. We've learned that this probably is not the best way to go. That's why we're here engaging with you and we're hearing what you're asking for. We're trying to change that going forward so that parliamentarians will be involved through the process for the Centre Block for sure.

•(1225)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: You mentioned earlier that there's a prescribed allocation of MPs' offices in the building, as we discussed, for Centre Block. How much backbench MP office space is there in West Block?

Ms. Susan Kulba: As you know, I'm sure it's really about the leadership. There is not a lot of room. The West Block is not a very large building so the primary objective was to fit the chamber and as much MP space in there as we could. It resulted in a fairly little amount of office space.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: When we finish Centre Block, do we have to close West Block again?

Ms. Susan Kulba: The current plan would be to reconvert the chamber into committee rooms. That was what was established in 2001. It doesn't mean that's going to be the final plan. At this point, I would say we're going to have to have a good look at that together with the parliamentary needs at the time, and determine whether or not those renovations go forward, or if there are other requirements at that time that are more pertinent.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): If I may be so bold in suggesting something, Bruce Stanton has a great article called "A Parallel Chamber". I think it's in the parliamentary magazine. It may be a topic for conversation. I can send it to anybody on this committee. It's by our deputy speaker Bruce Stanton. They have parallel chambers in both Australia and the U.K. They work very well, very efficiently. To my colleagues, let's give this serious consideration. We can even do it before that, but certainly for the conversion of West Block back to just committee rooms, we should think about that.

I have a question, as a former press person, about the press hot room, as they call it. You've probably already answered this but I'm

going to ask it again. Do you currently have a press room in West Block?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: There's a space, sir, for the hot room in the West Block.

Mr. Scott Simms: A space for...?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: It's for the press, where our press conferences will be held, also, sir. There's also a green room in the back of it for any television requirements.

Mr. Scott Simms: Do you have the sound booth there as well?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: How does it compare to the current one here?

Ms. Susan Kulba: In terms of space for the press itself, there's less space for their offices. They have expressed in part of the requirements that it wouldn't be enough so they accepted space in the National Press Building for some of the staff. But the room that Mr. Aubé is referring to is the replacement for the Charles-Lynch room, and essentially, it's probably a little bigger and it's obviously more modern in terms of technology.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay, because we have two different things here that we're doing. We have a room for them to do their work—call it a designated work station, whatever you wish—but we also have the studio down here. I guess what I'm asking about is not so much the Charles-Lynch room, but this room called....

Ms. Susan Kulba: The hot room.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's right.

Are there no plans to have one there?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, there is space. We just aren't necessarily calling it the hot room, but if you will, there is space for them there, and they have additional space in the National Press Building because the West Block space is not as large as their current space.

Mr. Scott Simms: Does the studio have the actual studio, a green room, as well as work stations?

Ms. Susan Kulba: No. There's a separate space for them within West Block.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Obviously, it's not as big as the one here, but nevertheless it gives them space. Okay.

Did you consult with the media on this?

Ms. Susan Kulba: We consulted through the press gallery at the time. Currently Collin Lafrance is our contact who represents the press gallery. He works with us to determine requirements.

Mr. Scott Simms: In the Speaker's place, you have room for the office, obviously, as well as a larger space for entertaining people such as certain special foreign guests who come in, and so on and so forth. It's obviously not as big as it is here, but in comparison how big is it?

•(1230)

Ms. Susan Kulba: I couldn't give you the square footage right now off the top of my head, but we can come back with it.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. All right.

Ms. Susan Kulba: It's a different building. The corridors in the West Block run down the centre of the wings, so all the rooms are narrower. That's why I'd have to go back and check on the figures for you.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. I see what you mean with the smaller hallways.

In this particular case, with the way it is laid out there right now, in your opinion, which part of the current Centre Block—and I'm meaning House of Commons functions now—will be diminished over in West Block? Is it the MPs' offices? Is it administration?

Ms. Susan Kulba: All the requirements were reduced going into West Block, knowing it was a smaller building. Certainly there are fewer MPs' offices. The administration is in smaller offices. All the services have been reduced. Everyone has compromised to fit in.

Mr. Scott Simms: What's the comparison there of administration offices compared with MPs' offices?

Ms. Susan Kulba: I would have to go back and get you a figure on that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Are these all what we originally set out to do? Has anything changed since we first began? Have there been modifications to the MPs' offices?

I think what you're saying—and pardon my ignorance on the issue—is that the offices are the same as what you would expect for any MP. It's just that there are fewer of them.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Scott Simms: Was that your intention there from the beginning?

Ms. Susan Kulba: It was part of the design, because the building is much smaller than Centre Block. You just cannot put as much function as we have the ability and square footage to do here in Centre Block. We didn't have that availability in West Block.

Mr. Scott Simms: For the administration, was it the same thing? Are the offices the same size as here, except there are fewer of them?

Ms. Susan Kulba: No, they're reduced and there are fewer of them.

Mr. Scott Simms: They're reduced and there are fewer of them for the administration.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes. In stage two of West Block, once we return to Centre Block, it's intended that all of that administration space and the higher-end offices will convert to MPs' offices.

The Chair: Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thanks, Chair.

I have to tell you, I could be wrong but I really feel like there was kind of a wake-up call being recognized by our witnesses here that there's a whole different approach to doing Centre Block than was done with West Block in terms of input, which is kind of surprising, but it is what it is. I guess it's better the wake-up call comes now rather than seven years from now or, in the case of West Block, after the fact. I'll characterize that as a good thing, even though it's somewhat surprising.

I want to compliment Mr. Simms. I think it's absolutely brilliant that the next Parliament—or the one after that, whenever they do it—

wrestles with this idea of a second chamber. A few of us were interested in that when it first came up—I think it was here—and we had quite a discussion. We didn't even know it existed. The idea of a parallel chamber was mentioned in the context, not of helping the government out by giving them more time per se, whoever the government is, but as an opportunity for more members' time, because it runs parallel. I think that's what most of the other chambers do.

I have to tell you that when I first heard that, I think a few of us were kind of, "Hey, now there's an idea". Without changing the dynamics of the place, without changing anything really, it's an add-on. My point is to have that discussion while the chamber still exists in West Block, because that could very easily provide the footprint.... What a great place to have it, in one of the main buildings on the Hill. I just want to compliment Mr. Simms, and I hope that the next PROC is seized of that issue and initiates that debate to wrestle with, because I think there's a good chance that future Parliaments might go with that, I really do. I think it's something that could be added without jarring everything else, good or bad, that has evolved in our 150-odd years.

That begs the question, and I do have a question. In terms of planning, if they did go with the second chamber, it sounds like the future of West Block, in terms of the reconversion, is not finalized, which would make good sense. Is it, as it seems to me, a prime time-wise opportunity to be looking at a parallel chamber? I thought it was a good idea, but you folks are the ones who are actually going to be on the ground. What do you think in terms of the timing of having that discussion on any kind of a secondary chamber when we already have one built? What are your thoughts on that off the top of your head?

• (1235)

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, I think it is a good time, because as we progress into the Centre Block renovation, we're going to have to already start thinking about what we do with the West Block once it comes to moving back into Centre Block. We'll want to know that well in advance, what that final use of the West Block is.

Mr. David Christopherson: Just one last thing I'll throw out there, Chair, and this might be a bridge too far. I don't know, but it doesn't seem that crazy to me. We're recognizing that these kinds of projects require more than just very competent, capable professional folks, which you all are, but it takes more than that to build a Parliament. We're now talking, and I think we're making it very clear that parliamentarians need to have a say. The journalists and the professional media need to have a say. The security people do, obviously, and I would assume that's a no-brainer.

As we go forward, what's the budget? I just want to ask about the budget. I'm going to add an idea, but I want to ask questions that just occurred to me. Is the budget fixed?

Mr. Rob Wright: No, at this point, the baseline budget or schedule has not been firmly established. That requires information from the functional programming and the final assessment of the building's condition.

Mr. David Christopherson: The last thing I'll throw out, Chair, is this. Could it be an idea that for at least maybe a week there be an opportunity for the public to have a say before everything is finalized? Obviously, not every Canadian can go through here, but with current communications means, you can bring this to everybody's living room and they can have an opportunity to give input. That would allow all those brilliant architects, those former parliamentarians who are out there and citizens, who obviously have a vested interest in their Parliament, a formal opportunity for that feedback as almost the last piece. As everybody else has given their professional input, take one step back and put the whole thing out there to the nation and say, "Canadians, what do you think? We're about to finalize this. Do you have an opinion? We really want to hear it."

That might be something we may want to build in.

I'll relinquish the floor with that.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

[*Translation*]

We will now continue with Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to continue in the same vein as Mr. Christopherson. If I understand correctly, the budget and the plans have not been completely established.

Earlier, you referred to the fact that a Parliament is not a house. I simply want to say that previously I had a business. I renovated it three times while operating it. Before beginning renovations, I knew exactly what the final result would be, and the deadlines involved. I'm a bit surprised by your answers. In principle, when taxpayers' money is at stake, we should know what is going to happen before we start.

My questions are very specific and are addressed to Ms. Kulba. Earlier, you talked about square footage. Do you know how many square feet there are in the House of Commons? If you don't know, you can send us the answer. Do you know how many square feet the House of Commons will occupy in the West Block? You can send us that answer as well.

What percentage of that space is currently occupied by the administration, the members, the whips' offices, the office the government leader and those of the ministers? What percentage of the space will all of these entities occupy in the West Block? I suppose it is possible to obtain those figures. If I understand correctly, we don't know how many square feet we have here and how many we will have over there. I would appreciate that information.

Thank you.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: We have taken note of your question and we will be providing those details.

[*English*]

We'll provide the answer to Madame Lapointe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you, I appreciate it greatly.

• (1240)

[*English*]

The Chair: On the same topic, I assume that if we don't get through all the questions—because David has 27 rounds—that you would be prepared to answer to our researchers or our clerk with some written answers to some other questions.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: We will, sir.

The Chair: Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: David's fundamental point is not that he has more questions today, but as time goes on more questions will arise, and this committee ought to play an oversight role unless we can feel confident that some other committee of the House of Commons is doing the same thing. Would that be a fair assessment?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: No, I don't have the confidence.

Mr. Scott Reid: I don't have that confidence either. That's not the fault of individuals here. I think it's a fault of the fact that we have a process that has been rolling along inevitably due to the deterioration of this building and the fact that technology is changing. We have to figure out a practical management structure for the next decade or whatever it turns out to be.

I had a further thought, but maybe I should wait.

The Chair: Okay. Maybe I'll put you ahead of Mr. Graham's next round, because he's had a few. Do you want to go?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes. It's this thought—

The Chair: Sorry, I want to comment on what you just said. I spoke to the Speaker a few minutes ago, and he said it's incumbent on us to express our interest too. I think we've done that today. If we didn't express an interest, then we weren't involved before.

Go ahead with what you were going to say.

Mr. Scott Reid: The very first job I had, other than being a paperboy, was working as a draftsman at an engineering firm, Clemann Large Patterson—consulting engineers in Ottawa's west end. When I started working there, we were involved with the wrap-up of the renovation of the East Block in 1981. With the passage of some 35-odd years, the East Block is now once again requiring some renovations.

I remember at that time that part of what was going on was dealing with the previous sets of renovations—there had been one in 1910 and one at a somewhat later point—which makes the point that we're not talking about doing a renovation of a building. We're talking about a constant upgrading, modernizing process, both for this building, for East Block of course and eventually for West Block, even though right now it's been brought up to a very high standard. I don't know how Public Works, how you folks treat this kind of thing, if you have some kind of plan for this kind of cyclical upgrading and renovating. I'd be interested in your thoughts in that regard.

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

We've been focused quite a bit on the restoration and modernization of the Centre Block, which is the key parliamentary building, of course. It's set within the broader parliamentary precinct, of which there are many critical assets.

What I would say is that, at Public Services and Procurement Canada, we really have what I would call three buckets of approaches for the facilities here.

One is the major restoration and modernization under which the Centre Block would fall, as would the West Block, as you referenced. This usually requires the emptying of the building and a complete overhaul of the building, stem to stern, to bring it up to state-of-the-art condition under modern building codes and to modernize the facilities.

We also do what we call recapitalization and repair projects. The recapitalization projects are done in occupied buildings, to essentially take care of fairly large segments of the building. The East Block, as you referenced, is undergoing a recapitalization right now of four of the entrances and towers that were in very poor condition. That is to ensure that the building can continue operating in a safe condition and to reduce the cost of major overhaul projects downstream. There is also a repair bucket to make sure that we have an ongoing maintenance program to ensure that the buildings don't rust out as they did in the past.

The last point I would make is that when we do these major overhauls, we really pay attention to trying and get the maximum life cycle out of them so that we don't have to empty them for a very extended period. The goal here is to have a very robust program in place so that we are not in the situation we have been in over the past decade and that we face in the current situation.

• (1245)

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

The Chair: Just before I go to Mr. de Burgh Graham, I have a really quick question, and I'll need a really short answer.

As you have said, there are towers. There are lots of nooks and crannies in this building. My understand is that a couple of months ago the Speaker asked for a tour of those nooks and crannies in this building. Has that occurred?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Not that I'm aware of. He may have had a tour with somebody other than us, but from my team, that's not something I'm aware of.

The Chair: I think it was your team that he asked.

Mr. Graham.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

I would just like to respond to a couple of quick comments from Mr. Reid and Mr. Christopherson before I get back to my questions.

First, Scott, I was born in 1981, so it was interesting to hear your history. Thanks for that.

Mr. Scott Reid: You too will be old one day.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I'm sure it will come.

You're right. What I want is a recurring meeting. I want this to happen again and again. Whether all of us are here or whether none

of us is here, next Parliament, PROC needs to sit down with this group at least once or twice a year and ask where we are and how it is going, to catch things before they become a problem, instead of saying, "Oh, look. We missed that seven years ago," which is what I think is going to happen with West Block when we move there in a few weeks.

Mr. Christopherson, you have talked about public consultations. We would do it for an intersection in a town.

Mr. David Christopherson: I was thinking that in my municipal days we wouldn't dare do that to city hall without asking Hamiltonians what they thought.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Exactly.

You were saying we have to talk to security. Do we talk to the union or the management? I will leave that one alone for the moment.

When we closed West Block in 2010, what year did we plan to reopen? Do you remember?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

If my memory serves—and I was around then—we closed West Block in early 2011. The initial plan, I believe, was 2018, but I would have to go back and look at some documents.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: As a staffer, I was told that it would be back in 2014, possibly 2015. I just want to put that out there.

This is related, but not directly. I think it was in 2012 that the lawn between the Justice Building and the Confederation Building got shut down to the public to build a tunnel between the buildings. It was supposed to take a year. Six years later, that lawn still has not reopened, and as far as I know, we have no access to that tunnel.

Can you address that at all? Are we going to see that kind of problem again up here?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That tunnel was closed to implement a steam line through it. That work was completed. They are doing a continual program of work on those buildings with recapitalization work, especially on the Confederation Building. PSPC has been using some of that space for a construction yard. Some of the area around the Confederation Building itself is not safe because of the work that's going on above, so that's why it hasn't been reopened. If that work gets completed, then there should be no reason not to open the lawn.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Is it important that we keep the chamber in the same physical shape as it is today, or is this the opportunity to rethink how the chamber is structured? Is that a place we can't go?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That's the million-dollar question, because our Parliament is still growing and, as you know, in 2015 we had to find a solution for how to fit additional members into that chamber. The chamber itself is of high heritage value, so these are some of the tough questions that we're going to be asking ourselves, and you, in coming up with the solution for those items.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: My last question for the moment, to everybody's relief, will be.... You mentioned in your opening comments that the building wasn't built to the blueprints we have. Can you expand on that? That seems like a very bizarre statement. We have blueprints and architectural plans, and the building doesn't actually match that. Is that correct?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That is correct. It was constructed over a four-year period, and I think we've talked about the fact that at that time, steel was a new product. It was actually the architect who decided to be a little more innovative, and to start to experiment with some of those materials. Rather than redoing all the plans, they implemented some of those changes on site, and that's what we're left with.

• (1250)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: We're left without documentation.

Ms. Susan Kulba: That is correct.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Chair.

I only have a brief question. It has to do with the Peace Tower. I read an article not too long ago that said Dr. McCrady would still be doing carillon concerts for a period of time while this place is under construction. Am I right to assume that at one point the carillon will be silenced? Do we have a time frame on when that would be?

The second point is the Peace Tower flag. I think most Canadians see the flag at the top of the Peace Tower as a very important symbol. I've always loved seeing it fly. Will there come a time when the flag will not be able to fly from the top of the Peace Tower and/or be changed on a daily basis? I think in the U.K., there was a strong public backlash when Big Ben was going to be silenced for a period of time. I think Canadians may have a similar viewpoint if the carillon is silent, and if that flag is no longer flying.

I'm curious about if and when that might happen.

Ms. Susan Kulba: We're very aware of that. Our intent is to keep the carillon going as long as possible. I'll turn it over to my colleagues about the schedule.

Mr. Rob Wright: I'll ask Ms. Garrett to maybe add some more detail.

I'll start with the flag. The intent is to really try to keep the flag flying throughout the duration of the entire restoration. There may be a very short period when we may have to replace the flagpole—things like that—but really it would be about keeping the flag flying every day we possibly can for the duration of the restoration.

The carillon is a little more complex, because at this point, part of the scope would be to fully restore the bells. There would be a time when the carillon in the Peace Tower would not be able to operate fully. As Ms. Kulba indicated, we are working to keep that going as long as possible and to have it come back online as quickly as possible.

Jennifer, do you want to add anything?

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: Thank you.

I would just add that there's a lot of understanding that maintaining a positive visitor experience, for anybody visiting the

Hill, is going to be very important during the renovation. To that end, we've actually had some very detailed discussions with our construction manager, PCL/EllisDon, and we have a commitment that the carillon will be able to play up until at least 2022. By that time, we'll have a detailed understanding of our approach to the construction, and we'll be able to provide further information on plans around the carillon.

Mr. John Nater: I'm wondering this, just as a side point. Last summer, Dr. McCrady was in my riding of Perth—Wellington, in Stratford, for Stratford Summer Music, playing a mobile carillon. Come 2022, perhaps there will be some alternatives for a carillon of some form here on Parliament Hill for that visitors' experience.

That's all I have for now, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: Regarding the steel structure and the fact that we don't have accurate drawings of this.... Normally, you have as-built drawings with any engineering or architectural project. Is it the case that these just weren't done, or is it the case that they were done up to the standards of the day, which were different from what they are today?

I assume we can make the assumption that with regard to the recently completed West Block, and any other work going forward, there would be very thorough as-built drawings. I'm sure that our initial plans for West Block were altered at some point, in one or more ways, in the course of construction.

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you for the question.

Maybe I'll pass the details over to the architectural team.

For the West Block, I would say that for buildings of this vintage it's not uncommon at all to run into that issue. It's a common issue.

One thing that we've done on the Centre Block to reduce risk on a go-forward basis is to create a building information model. It's a 3-D model of the building, which is really going to facilitate the design work, help the functional programming work and could be a great tool to make visual presentations to parliamentarians about how the building could work in the future. It will also have a great benefit for operations when it comes back online as well.

Of course with the West Block, we've taken great care to ensure that we've not repeated some of the issues of the past, on a go-forward basis.

I'll hand it over to the architectural team to add any more details.

• (1255)

Mr. Duncan Broyd: On the record of what was built, there's actually incredible, high-definition black and white photography of the construction. Our engineers have a lot of detail of people literally bolting connections together in the steel work. That, in conjunction with the drawings that they do, has allowed them to start the story. The investigations are what complete the story. That deals with the issue here. There are quite good records.

As Mr. Wright said, the building information model, which you are probably aware of from the work that Carleton University did before the project, is something that is being continually built on. We continue to work with Carleton University to refine that model and add new information to it as we go and as we discover things. It's a very complete record of what is here and what is going to be done.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

The Chair: Before we go to Mr. Simms, would anyone who has to leave mind if we stayed a few minutes later for people who want to ask questions? Is that okay?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I have to go.

The Chair: That's too bad.

We have Mr. Simms, and then Mr. Graham.

Mr. Scott Simms: Actually, I think Mr. Graham and I had the same question.

Can I ask?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I can go after anyway.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's just that I have a stupid comment to begin with, for our architectural team.

You're from the U.K., is that right?

Mr. Duncan Broyd: Thank you for the question.

I was born in the U.K.. I actually have lived in Canada for the last six years and my walk to work is 10 minutes. The accent might be a bit of a giveaway.

Mr. Scott Simms: I was just wondering. I was going to ask when Big Ben is coming back, since we're talking about all this—

Mr. Duncan Broyd: Larry may be able to help you with that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Actually for bragging rights.... They shut down Big Ben, but we're not shutting ours. You can say that.

The Memorial Chamber is very special. People are literally blown away by the Memorial Chamber. A lot of people who don't know that it exists go there and are absolutely stunned by its honour, and just by the emotional aspect of it as well. Can you comment on what we're doing with the Memorial Chamber?

Ms. Susan Kulba: It will be closed as part of the renovations. Acknowledging that it's such an important space for what it represents, we engaged with Veterans Affairs, which are the actual owners of the Books of Remembrance in the House of Commons. We've decided that it was very important to keep the books on the Hill. As such, Centrus has designed a new, temporary space in the visitor welcome centre for those books during the closure of Centre Block.

Mr. Scott Simms: Will it be treated as it was before? People can go in and out in an orderly fashion over at the visitors centre?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I have couple of quick questions. They all are.

First of all, I want to make sure that you're taking as many good pictures of these renovations as you received from the last one.

Is that a yes? Okay.

For the Memorial Chamber, if you're standing in the Peace Tower today and you look at West Block, there's a tower on West Block. It has a glass floor at the same level of the Peace Tower's observation deck. Is that going to be open to the public? Is there any plan for that? Is it possible for it to be an alternative to the Peace Tower for the next 25 years?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you for the question.

I think you're referring to the MacKenzie Tower.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Yes.

Mr. Rob Wright: When we started the West Block project, there was an assessment of whether the MacKenzie Tower could be turned into occupiable space. There was no feasible way to meet the modern building code in the MacKenzie Tower. Although the Prime Minister's office is at the base and there's a family room space above that, there's really no functional space within the full height of the tower proper.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

I guess it goes without saying that—you probably don't even have to answer—all of the ornate carvings and woodwork in some of the offices, stone carvings, bullet holes and everything will remain as part of history in the renovation.

● (1300)

Mr. Larry Malcic: Yes, it is certainly our intention to, as much as possible, maintain, restore and keep the heritage of the building and all of the main heritage spaces, which have already been identified. We recognize the value that the building has, in terms of its history and symbolism and the quality it conveys. It was built one hundred years ago, and it reflects the values, traditions and really the aspirations of the Canadian people. We want to preserve that.

In the extension of the visitor welcome centre, phase two, we want, as much as possible, to convey contemporary Canada as well, within that building. What you see will be restored and retained.

The Chair: Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I think these are questions that are probably not really for the architects. They're more things I would like to get on the record for policy-makers, more in our normal role, as things we're trying to get those who are in higher decision-making bodies than ourselves to take into account.

I would like to go on the record as saying that I believe we ought to preserve unhidden the bullet holes from the tragic events of October 2014, so that they can be seen by any visitor.

Of course I'm referring not merely to the bullet holes around the plaque in honour of Alpheus Todd. There are also two bullet holes in the desk in the library, and there's one in the door of the opposition room. I'm not sure you want to keep those doors in place. There might be other reasons for getting rid of them.

These are records of something important that happened here. We strive to make this the peaceable kingdom, as the moniker has it. The fact that we haven't always succeeded doesn't mean we should cover up those aspects of our past. I realize that you aren't the folks making the decision, but those are my own views on that.

I don't want to ask about the Memorial Chamber, but I think the word that was being sought was "beautiful". People are struck by how beautiful it is. That's what it is. It's a very spiritual place.

I want to ask about the memorial books themselves. I assume they're being moved, and that they will be in a separate spot and will continue to be treated in the same manner and available to the public during the renovation period. Is that correct?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That's correct.

The new space that Centrus has designed in the visitor welcome centre will be where they are moved to. The altars that they are currently on, which were created a number of years ago, will be physically moved over with the books. It will be open to the public as it is currently in Centre Block.

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay. People will see that after they go through security, I assume, as opposed to before.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: After 17 and a half years of enjoying having an office in this building—in fact, my office was directly above that oval green shape up there, on the fourth floor—I've been moved out, against my will, to the Confederation Building.

I'm not complaining, but I do have this question about the Confederation Building. It too has a tower. The building was built almost exactly at the same time as the new Centre Block was built, and completed, in that case, in 1931. Atop the tower, was a bronze statue of what was seen as the most modern transportation, a biplane, which served as a weather vane. At some point I assume it just stopped rotating in the wind, it was taken down and it's vanished.

For things like that.... I'm actually curious about that particular item itself. I don't think it should be destroyed or removed. I think eventually it should get back up there when we finish doing our work on the Confederation Building.

Let me just start with that one. We're dealing with secondary buildings, buildings that are part of the Hill precinct. They're not as iconic as this one, but they nonetheless have great historical value. May I assume that items like that are being preserved and that the intention is to restore them at some point in their original form?

• (1305)

Mr. Rob Wright: Yes, absolutely. In fact, with all the heritage assets within the parliamentary precinct, we take great care in the planning and their future restoration and modernization.

The Confederation Building is certainly one of those facilities that is in the plans to be fully restored on a go-forward basis, including the old weather vane, which unfortunately several years ago had to be removed because it was posing health and safety risks. The plan would be to reinstate that in due time.

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

Yes, David.

Mr. David Christopherson: Chair, I was just going to ask this, in the interest of ensuring as best we can in this Parliament, that the PROC committee continues to play the kind of oversight that I think the majority, if not all of us, agree should happen. Is it in the best interest of this committee to notationally schedule a follow-up briefing so it's at least there?

The clerk of the next committee can advise the committee that this was suggested or set aside as a time. No Parliament can bind a future Parliament, but again, it's to do everything we can to make sure that this doesn't fall off the table. Time is the enemy, as we're learning with West Block—finding out that there are issues and that a bit of input at the front end might have made a big difference in the operation.

I leave that with you, Chair. I don't even know if we can do it or not, but I think it's certainly within our purview to leave a suggested date, say maybe six or eight months in, after they get settled and get into a routine. The clerk and the chair of the day can bring it back to the committee and say, "Hey, the last committee in the last Parliament thought that this might be a good time". Then they can be seized of the issue and decide whatever it is they're going to decide at that time.

I just leave that with you, Chair, as a belt and suspenders in making sure that we don't lose this thing.

The Chair: We won't lose this. My understanding, from what Ms. Kulba said, is that there will be a lot more engagement before that—like in the near future—as they work on the plans.

I'm certainly glad that everyone accepted my suggestion to have this meeting. I think a lot of good communication has been done. It's a great path forward to having a very successful centre of democracy for the people and for everyone involved. It's a very important building for Canada, and it's great to have such professionals as you working on it. As we work on it together as a team, I think we will have a much better path forward now. It's very exciting, so thank you very much.

For the committee, if the House is still sitting on Thursday, we'll do our meeting on the report. If it's not, we probably won't meet.

Thank you, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

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