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**Standing Committee
on Procedure
and House Affairs**

Legislative precinct

**Comité permanent
de la procédure
et des affaires de la Chambre**

Enceinte parlementaire

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 9 February 2023

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43^e législature

Jeudi 9 février 2023

Chair: Jennifer K. French
Clerk: Christopher Tyrell

Présidente : Jennifer K. French
Greffier : Christopher Tyrell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PROCEDURE
AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA PROCÉDURE
ET DES AFFAIRES DE LA CHAMBRE**

Thursday 9 February 2023

Jeudi 9 février 2023

The committee met at 1100 in the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel, Ottawa.

LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Well, good morning, members. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will now come to order here in the Rideau Room at the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel. Of course, we are meeting here today as part of the committee's ongoing study of the lifespan of and deficiencies with the building systems in the Ontario legislative precinct and the need for rehabilitation and restoration.

First, a little about our itinerary for today: We will meet this morning from 11 until 12 noon and then recess for lunch. Following lunch, we have been invited to meet informally with our federal counterparts, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, at 1 p.m. in the West Block. Then we'll come back here at 2:30 in order to meet with officials from the House of Commons administrative team.

The subcommittee had a brief discussion surrounding our research officer taking notes at that informal meeting this afternoon and preparing a summary document of resulting key points and recommendations so that information could be useful to this committee and its members who might not be able to attend that meeting this afternoon. How does the committee feel about doing that? Is everyone in agreement?

Interjections: Agreed.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay, good. In that case, we're in agreement and, Nick, we look forward to your notes.

Yesterday was quite an interesting day. The committee was privileged to have the opportunity to tour several public buildings here in Ottawa that have either recently undergone or are in the process of undergoing significant renovations. Those locations include 180 Wellington Street, the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, as well as the House of Commons's West and Centre Blocks.

Our meeting this morning is to give the committee members here an opportunity to discuss what was observed and what was learned on those tours and to get all of that knowledge and learning on the record with Hansard. So I would open the floor to members for discussion. Yes, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We don't often get an opportunity to travel with committees. Obviously, with COVID, it slowed things down a little bit. I did want to say a thank you to everybody who has helped make this happen: of course the folks that are providing us with our Hansard services, with our televised services, camera operators—everybody that's come a long way to help make this happen. Thank you all of you guys for making this work.

It's been an interesting couple of days to try to, I guess, suss out what we're looking for, certainly as members, and how we can be responsible stewards of making sure that Queen's Park and the buildings associated with the parliamentary precinct are truly up to modern standards, not just from an aesthetic perspective but from a safety standpoint.

I think we've had an opportunity now to really see what's going on, a peek behind the curtain at Queen's Park. It's been great to tour the building, get to see some spaces that we normally wouldn't see, and have an opportunity to really understand better what a lot of the challenges are when we look at what that building looks like for the future, and, of course, being able to dovetail that with what's going on here.

Obviously the House of Commons has been under renovation for, gosh, the better part of almost 20 years, I think, at this point. It was great to be able to tour the buildings that you had mentioned and really get a sense of what we can achieve at Queen's Park and some of the different, I guess you could say, "notions" that go into that and, of course, best practices.

I would be very interested in hearing some of the feedback from other members as to what they've thought about our time here in Ottawa, and then, once we move towards the end of the conversation, I do have a motion that I would like to move, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. And we will all wait for that motion until later? All right.

Mr. Hsu.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'll start off just by mentioning two things that were notable yesterday. One was this idea of construction management to manage a very large project—not as large as the one here, but we will be challenged with overseeing the management of a large project for which the

design may change, the plans may change as the work proceeds. And setting up this construction management structure, I thought, was very important to help with cost controls.

And then this other offhand remark that was made about how to hire the right people to oversee everything, also to make things run smoothly and do the right planning to avoid unforeseen costs, or to put in the right planning and to anticipate things that could go wrong—I thought that was really interesting.

One recommendation that was like: Don't fool around. Go to headhunters and hire the best people to head the team. That was one of the pieces of advice that—it was just an offhand remark as we were walking through the construction site, but I thought it was good to make note of.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I want to reiterate MPP Harris's comments and thank the legislative staff for organizing this and helping us come to Ottawa to see the renovations, which are extensive, as we saw yesterday. For me, one of the big takeaways which sort of reinforced what this group had already discussed in Toronto was that you need to decant completely, whether that's legislative staff, but also parliamentarians. It just makes it more smooth and hearing that some of our colleagues in Britain are having challenges with that, when they don't decant from the precinct. So I know obviously that will present challenges of its own, but it was good to have that perspective of how to move through that process.

I know some of my colleagues have unofficially, before the meeting, mentioned about just the size of it. Obviously, provincially we don't have as much space for our precinct as they do up here in Ottawa, but still it will be a large undertaking. Hearing how they've worked through some of those iterations—and I know, as we continue to study this issue, it will be interesting to see and listen. As the Chair mentioned, we're going to informally meet with our colleagues federally and it will be interesting to get their perspectives on it, as well, from the elected officials and how they've sort of processed through this.

One other thing that stuck out, as well, which will have to be factored into a renovation would be around bringing in the gas and the electricity and everything just for the renovations—those big pipes we saw in the hallways there and bringing that infrastructure in just to administer the rehabilitation around that. I thought it was very interesting to see all the categorization. Essentially every brick is bar-coded and stored, and also the highlighting, which I think we'll have to take into account in Toronto; with limited space for storage, as well, how we're going to store the bricks and the historical aspects of that moving forward and working away through that and highlighting some of those issues, which we may not have thought of until seeing the renovations here in Ottawa. But I found it very informative.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. West.

MPP Jamie West: I want to join my colleagues in thanking everyone who helped make the tour happen. One of the things I was thinking about, as well, was: We've talked about the need for planning; that was really drilled home.

Yesterday in the elevator, I ran into the communications team that set up all this stuff and I forgot that we would have a communications team, right? The immediate staff. But it's that idea of, who have you talked to and who are you missing when you are talking to people in the logistics? For example, as MPPs, we have a good idea of what we would like to see as MPPs. The government side would like more offices and flexible office space, but if we don't talk to our support staff, if we don't talk to security, if we don't talk to—and we probably all have the right ideas, but I think that's really key, to make sure we do a good job.

I think that, while we're thanking support staff, we need to thank people like Darrell and Jennifer. I forget everyone else's names; there were six or seven people who had really gone out of their way to give us the tour—

Interjection: Darrell.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, Darrell. And I don't know if I should move a motion, but I think like sending a letter of thanks from the committee—I would appreciate it if we could do that.

The other thing: We got into a conversation about she had cut down a tree or something, but I was thinking about these two quotes about trees. One is that the best time to plant a tree is—I don't know, 50 years ago or whatever it is—and the second best time is today. And I've been thinking about that because, really, this is something that should have been started a long time ago. We're overdue and we're just starting to plan, so I'm very glad we're planting the tree today, you know? That's important.

The other one is, I think, wise men plant trees under whose shade they'll never rest—something like that, right? And I was thinking about that as well because we have ideas about what we'd like to solve or make better, say, as MPPs or government-side members, but your cycle as an elected official isn't always the longest. We're not all Gilles Bisson. So many of us might never actually be in office when we see the results of what we're doing here. I think that's something that reflects well on the committee, that we're making these plans for the future to help government, opposition sides and staff—everyone who works in that building, the tour groups and stuff. This will be something successful.

1110

So that's kind of been in my head, along with what has been said about how there is so much planning. I know we're not going to do the planning, but it was—how do you move the people from where they are so you can move people into where they are? How do you have the warehouses to store things? Thinking about what you need to order and how early you have to order it. We didn't have a conversation, but just near the end, there was a bunch of workers who piled into that one room with us, and I was thinking about how you need lay-down areas for them. You need washrooms and break areas. There's all this stuff, which I know the contractors handle, but it's a big project. I'm really appreciative that we came here to see the scope and get an understanding of how large it is.

I just mainly want to thank people. I would like, if I need a motion, to move a motion to thank people who helped

with the tour because I think it was really helpful, at least for me on the committee. I see people nodding their heads—so for some of my colleagues as well.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I have a bit of a speakers list, but before I continue with that, further to what Mr. West has requested, we do have a list of those who were awesome on the tours yesterday: Kathryn Elliott, Darrell de Grandmont, André Dupuis, Lisette Comeau and Jennifer Garrett and her team.

Is the committee in agreement that we as a committee send formal letters of thanks and appreciation? I don't know that we require a formal motion, but—we're in agreement? Okay. Clerk, can we request that that be done? Okay.

Mr. Graham McGregor: If I may—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Yes, Mr. McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: The only names that I would add—there was a health and safety person who was—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ève?

Mr. Graham McGregor: I think it was Ève. I'm not sure if her name's on the list, but she—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I said Jennifer Garrett “and team” because, you're right, there were some others that we'll make sure are included.

Mr. Graham McGregor: One of the things that I was kind of blown away by was the commitment to health and safety for us as they guided us along—particularly Centre Block was like a live construction site. They did a really good job of keeping us on task and keeping us safe. I saw Ève personally hook somebody's hard hat to their clothing because it had slipped off and things like that, so I'd want to include them on the letter if that's all right.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I think that would be fine.

Further to what Mr. West has said—I'm just going to insert myself a little bit—the idea of future-proofing is something that will come out in discussion but was very interesting: the members 20 years from now, “Will they actually need USB charging ports on their desk or will that already be obsolete six months from now?” kind of thing. So interesting conversations, even getting into the minutiae of it.

Continuing with our speakers list: Mr. Oosterhoff, and then Ms. Gallagher Murphy and then Miss Taylor.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, thank you so much, Chair. I echo the thanks of the rest of the team.

I thought there were a few really good take-aways. One was the comment about the vision plan. I mean, you have such rapid turnover of staff, of politicians, of the infrastructure, the human resources around these ideas; that they can switch, I thought, was really illustrative of the types of trade-offs that are going to have to be made through a vision plan that's revisited periodically. There's some stability—the reference to the West Block eaves-troughs or lack thereof, right? So they didn't put eaves-troughs in because that wouldn't have been exactly heritage-friendly, but now they have to clean all the walls all the time because of the drippage coming off the roofs that is staining the walls. So that was a little example to me of the

tensions that are existing in terms of a heritage site that you want to modernize but retain that heritage, and I thought that emphasis on having a core plan that you go back to—because if you have someone who's trying to shift it around all the time or changing people and positions, it becomes a mess and you're moving all over.

Tied in with that is what I perceived as the very explicit non-partisan nature of the construction project—in terms of it being started under a Liberal government and then continued under a decade of a Conservative government and now almost another decade of another Liberal government—you had multiple Prime Ministers, multiple cabinets that have gone through in that time. And, yet, there was a recognition of the continuance of that throughout even a global recession in 2008, which could have been a derauling event—I'll put it that way—just in terms of finances. I think that that was because of also the excellent job that people like Jennifer did in keeping the political overseers in line. What I mean by that is she says she does 30 to 40 committee visits every year. Those aren't all public, but her team is reporting to the oversight, and that builds trust among those who are involved from all parties. She said every single party is represented. They're all getting that feedback. That's a lot of work, going to that many committee meetings. That's probably more than half of us go to. And, yet, there she is being able to continue that vision because of the buy-in.

I think that's really important for us to remember as well: This isn't going to be something where we come up with a broad plan, we hand it over to a contractor and then we just kind of say, “Oh, hopefully, in 10 years, it all turns out well.” We're going to have to be continually involved in order to also sell that to our constituents.

The last point was—yes, you referenced it as well—the double domino that Lisette, I think, was talking about and the fact that the transition for the south of Wellington piece started in the 1970s. In the 1970s, they were telling the bank about the giant Macdonald building, that they were hoping to take it over, and then they took it over in the 2020s. I don't want us to take 50 years to have to do our renovations, but it's fascinating to me that they've been planning for this for so, so long. We really are, I think, behind the eight ball in terms of having to deal with that.

The last piece, very quickly, was the re-emphasis on the impracticalities of doing piecemeal work and that real emphasis on, “You guys are going to have to get out, do the work properly and come back. Don't try to do the basement and then do the first floor and then—it's just not practical.” I know you referenced that as well with our British colleagues, but I think that's a real message. Because I think one of the biggest pushbacks we might get from people is, “Can't you just do renovations piece by piece and keep it going instead of having to do a big decant?” That's my spiel.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): One of the other things—I'll just follow that because it connects—is the enabling projects that, as you talked about—all of the layers, that it wasn't just the one build. For example, when they talked about moving the books and having a space for

the daily turning of the pages so that veterans could still access the important-to-Canada books in another room. Those enabling projects that allowed for the bigger things—to think of what that might look like at Queen’s Park.

Ms. Gallagher Murphy.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I echo everybody’s thank-yous to everybody here who helped bring us here and then everybody on the tour yesterday. It was an amazing opportunity, especially to see the West Block.

A couple of items I wanted to note—and I heard this in the comment from MPP Hsu, as well as MPP Oosterhoff—and it’s with regard to how you keep the politics out of the vision to move this project forward. I did engage in a conversation with the gentleman in the morning to understand better how they managed that. And he said it’s a great question, because they had to have a separate body. As everybody heard, they called it a “Parliament body.” This group basically—yes, they worked with all the stakeholders, government etc., but it really kept the politics out. This is the group who kept passing the baton forward. Yes, they’re engaging with government and various stakeholders, but they are the ones—Lisette, the architect—back to MPP Hsu’s point about hiring the right people. These are the people with the expertise and the knowledge and can keep this project moving forward. I thought that was important to know, because this is a project here in Ottawa that has taken—as we’ve said, it’s 20 years. Anything that we are looking at for Queen’s Park, can’t say the timeline, but it’s going to be over a period of time. So to keep the politics out of it, I think, is critical, because that’s what we just witnessed yesterday.

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My other comment was with regard to what came out of the procurement process, and they talked about that. I thought that was critical because they really talked about making purchases ahead of time and storing those critical pieces so that when they get to that part of the project, they could then ensure that they had the material. It was already costed so they weren’t anticipating higher costs. I think those are important pieces to this puzzle as well in trying to control costs, because, obviously, we all want to see that. I think the point—it was Jennifer who brought that up yesterday in the afternoon at the West Block—that procurement is a critical component to this. So I just wanted to add that.

Some of the pitfalls that they talked about: Obviously, not letting politics get in the way—I just mentioned that; planning in advance for all the artifacts; the critical elements of the building to be stored off site—I know one of the members has mentioned that. It’s also about planning the chamber for the future, and this was noted when we were in the West Block and touring the chamber. Something they are taking into consideration is the increase of members, and I think that’s important that we look at that as well for our chamber, ourselves, at Queen’s Park. We have to anticipate, with population growth, that also means additional members. So I just wanted to add those points.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I’m just going to add for Hansard, for clarification, that all of these favourable and glowing references to Jennifer are about

Jennifer Garrett, who led the tour in the afternoon. I am also learning and am not the Jennifer being referenced.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: May I just throw in one more point?

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Gallagher Murphy.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: One more point about Jennifer—because, again in an offhand conversation, I wanted to understand a bit more about her and how she came to be because, my God, the knowledge that woman has. She’s an urban planner, which I thought was very interesting. She was headhunted and the government of Canada engaged her and she’s been on this project now for seven years. I thought that was very interesting because, again, the length of time somebody’s on this project to start seeing things come to fruition. So I just want to throw that in because kudos to her—an amazing, very knowledgeable woman.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: At the risk of reiterating so many things that we’ve already heard, I too thoroughly enjoyed the tour yesterday, was quite impressed with the leadership—again, Jennifer Garrett—and her leadership throughout this project and her team. The attention to detail that was paid, years before they were able to start the decampment; moving those specialized rooms such as the peace room and the memorials; watching and looking and seeing the indexing on every single piece of material that was moved throughout the entire precinct was quite amazing. Definitely a huge focus on making sure that we have the ability to store, and what can be stored inside compared to outside. And all of that pre-thought that went into it was so impressive.

It’s going to be exciting watching the precinct come throughout the years and seeing when people actually are able to move back into Centre Block. The attention to detail in the chamber and what every member’s need may be was definitely a focus. Making sure that we’re keeping the politics out of this, I think, is absolutely critical.

Using the construction management structure, and that it’s not the P3 model going forward but actually the in-house management of taking over that construction project will definitely—and they were very clear about that yesterday; that was something that kept their costs down. They had the agility to move as they needed to be able to do so and did not have to retender and restructure everything and go back for more permission. They had that leniency within their perimeters to be able to move when they needed to do so. I think it’s going to be absolutely critical in keeping those costs down and keeping the timelines moving to get the elected folks back into Queen’s Park in a timely manner.

I think just really looking and paying close attention, as we did yesterday—but this is a big project going forward, and really making sure that we’re watching those details of how they moved through this process and what they did so that we can reiterate it, because, to me, they were completely on the mark. I’m sure that all committee members would agree with me. Just from the time that we spent together yesterday, we could see the attention to detail. We could see the attention and hear the attention to making

sure that the members had what they needed when they needed it and that there was transparency. I think that was a big thing. There seems to be a lot of trust.

I've spoken to members I know since my time in Ottawa just last night, and they're saying, "Oh, yes, this is a great project, and it's actually moving very well." People who are working in the precinct right now are seeing that transition, they're feeling it, they're living it, because they're working in it, and they're pleased, and they're satisfied with what has been going on.

Again, making sure that we're not planning for the technology of today, I think, is going to be a really important piece.

The five-year reassessment piece is really important. They were always able to make sure that they were passing the baton on properly and that they were able to stay on that track and know exactly what made sense today compared to what made sense five years ago. I think making sure that they have that leniency to be able to do that and that that's part of the process will be complementary to what's going to be happening at Queen's Park.

Again, I want to thank all of the folks who have allowed us the opportunity to come here on this tour and to be able to participate, and I'm sure our transition and our decampment at Queen's Park will be better for it.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. West.

MPP Jamie West: I made some notes the other day, and I want to make sure we get it into our record so it helps later on with report-writing.

It was already talked about—the planning agreement and the long-term vision plan and how that's a plan for turnover of regular parliamentary staff just retiring or moving on, or election cycles.

Something I don't think I heard yet was about the conversation versus what we want and what we need—especially around the footprint of Queen's Park. It would be great to have a second building that size, but we're not going to have that. So how do we balance that? I think that was a good conversation. I tried crossing off as I was listening. This was just a thought I had about what we have at Queen's Park for decanting in terms of what's available to us or what might be available in the next couple of years in terms of space.

There was a good conversation in the beginning about building code upgrades. Certain things in building codes are—you're grandfathered in because it was already like that, and as you get into the changes, you're going to have to adjust certain things, which is important to look at.

I think I talked earlier about talking to people—but the engagement with the Indigenous community, with heritage groups, the public.

There was that whole conversation about how important it was in Ottawa to be able to see the Parliament Building and how they had to set up the borders for safety so people don't walk into the construction site but also so you can get your photo with it in the background, and the other work they're doing that wouldn't change the skyline you're used to, that's on the loonie, of what the Parliament Building looks like. I think that was really important.

There's talking to IT, the acoustics—that whole conversation about acoustics that I would never have thought of—or lighting, and also security.

1130

I think it's important that our Sergeant-at-Arms connects with their Sergeant-at-Arms. As elected officials, we take it for granted how safe we are, but there's a lot of work behind the scenes that we don't even notice that they're doing to ensure the safety of us and school groups, and all those things. As an architect, you might have ideas for transparent glass walls that may not be as safe, or whatever else, and so that has to be brought into it.

They had mentioned the background analysis report. I don't know what that was, but I wrote it down because it sounded very important and I didn't want to forget.

Also, dry runs and testing things before execution, I think, really helped. They made sure that things worked, and so I think that minimized any sort of delays, knowing they had basically set up their new House chamber, testing things out before actually trying to use it. Hats off to—that is a beautiful chamber. In my head, when they had relocated, I thought it was sort of—not as simple as a couple of card tables and stuff, but I thought, you know, this was a temporary thing. But it's a gorgeous place, and it holds that importance of the seat of government in Canada.

I just have three more. The table designs: I just want to make sure we've talked about it. I don't know if it's something we'll need, but just the idea of being able to have that cable management and movement, and being able to use rooms for different things, I think, was really important as a conversation. I already talked about the Sergeant-at-Arms and [*inaudible*].

Oh, and just a comment: Last night during supper, MPP Oosterhoff and I were talking about the rebuilding after the fire at Queen's Park and how some of the stone work didn't come from Ontario. It would be nice if we could procure things from Ontario so that when people are doing tours of the building—to celebrate parts of our province where things came from, whenever possible. I think that would be a great sort of reflection of—renovations and upgrades done with stuff from across Ontario. That's a bigger plan, but I just wanted to note it. That's all I have, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Mr. McGregor is next.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Chair. I want to echo, obviously, all the colleagues' comments about just how professionally done the tour was from the staff that guided us through it.

One of the things that struck me was just the enormity of the project, not in terms of just scale but also scale of time, and how long and well thought out this was; and also, really, what a unique opportunity we were all privileged to have, to be able to go on the tour and see, literally, a moment of history happening before our eyes. I'm just eternally grateful to have the opportunity to do that kind of thing.

I do want to also draw attention to the non-partisan nature of the project. And you guys know me; I'm not a very partisan guy—no points of order. But it's important.

If you've seen the work as it's undertaken, it's not something that you ever see opposition parties going on about. You don't see complaints from either the government or the non-government at any given time, where politicians are kind of politicizing the issue.

But it was also very clear to me how immensely important parliamentary oversight was. While I think the non-partisan nature of it is very important, I do think having accountable, elected members to navigate some of the decisions—and really, when you think about the seat of government in Canada and, in our case, Ontario, these are kind of unique projects, right? The balance you have to have between heritage and functionality—one of the decisions they had to make: the Hall of Remembrance. That's not something a contractor can decide. Parliament—elected, accountable to people—needs to make those kinds of decisions.

I was really impressed by the decision-making structures that they had created, the kind of coordination between the capital region; the public works department; Jennifer Garrett, obviously, and her team; the labour itself, and the way that they continually report back to Parliament and get buy-in on some of the major—almost like nation-building decisions in some ways, really. So I do think we should take a lot of time and properly—if you set up that framework well at the start, I think it makes the project way easier 20 years in the future. Hats off to the federal government on what they did there.

I think we do have a significant land use challenge. That part of Ottawa is really built around Parliament and built around the federal government. Downtown Toronto is a little bit different; there's a variety of land use around, so I think a major challenge we need to think about is how we tackle the fact that we don't have the same access to space in our part of the world. I think that's going to be a challenge where, if we have good decision-making bodies—that we can handle those tough decisions together in a thoughtful way.

Lastly, there was something that I think the Chair brought up on the tour, but I think it should be pointed out: They had a partnership with Algonquin College when they were doing the temporary chamber—it's like a 10-year chamber or whatever. I do think there's an awesome opportunity for a lot of specialist work that could be once-in-a-lifetime work for some of our specialist tradespeople to take part in. I think that's something the committee should be aware of—the skills training aspect and the ability to partner with our local trade partners.

In a similar vein, on the trades aspect, the health and safety work that they did is incredibly impressive. This is a tough project. The underground work that they're doing—it's an old building that they're working in in Centre Block. Knock on wood, so far they've had, from what they say, no major incidents from a health and safety perspective. When we were on the tour, again, there was live stuff all over the place, and they guided us through that very, very well and made sure that we took it seriously. I was really impressed with the care that they have for the workers who are working on the site, making sure that they're safe.

I'm sure there are lots of good things they are doing that we can replicate, depending on the path we go down, if it's something we do at Queen's Park.

It was fun to be there with the committee members, as well, so thanks to all the committee members. I think the tour was a really valuable experience for everybody.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I am going to just add that, further to what you mentioned about the partnerships, I think there are some very special opportunities with the schools, the universities and colleges, in the skilled trades.

Also, one of the things that they mentioned in the chamber—and it might have been Algonquin, or it might have been Carleton; I don't remember—was the scanning. They technologically scanned the whole design in so that that was the reference for the different groups and contractors, and were using that to work with the knowledge and work with the—it's a phenomenal opportunity, obviously, with students in the broader province for us.

Next on the list: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I want to touch a little bit on the consultation and liaising piece. I've had a few opportunities now, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Legislative Affairs, to come to Ottawa outside of the committee and meet with a few of the folks we've met with and a few others, and one of the things that struck me is the leadership role that the project team with the House of Commons renovation has taken not only in Canada but around the world. We had an opportunity to hear a lot about what the UK is doing. They've really been instrumental in helping many countries in Europe and most certainly provinces here in Canada and some US states as well navigate the renovations or smaller scale stuff like what we've seen in PEI, for example, with Government House there, all the way up to what we're seeing here in Ottawa. They've been very good. They've been very gracious. They've been very open, which is important—learning best practices but also stuff that hasn't really worked. It's important that we make sure that we maintain that open dialogue with the folks here that are taking part in that project.

1140

And just in reference to some of the comments that we've heard, about future planning and what that's going to look like—some of that's already starting to take place, which is really good. You'll remember when we went on our tour of the Ontario Legislature, when we were led around the building and shown some of the deficiencies and different problems that we were having, they've already started to do some of that scanning and laying the groundwork for what things will look like in the future. Certainly, they haven't really pushed it too far yet, because we still haven't really gotten the firm “okay” to go ahead with a wholesale renovation. But rest assured some of that work is already being done, which is very important, because—as MPP West had mentioned—a lot of this work had been done 30, 40 years ago to get us ready, so we're really trying to play catch-up with a lot of this.

So in the last couple of years there's been some preliminary planning that has been started; there's the things that

we had seen when we went on our tour that our staff in Ontario are really focused on and want to see move forward in the meantime while we have these deliberations with committee, while we look at what's happening with the Ministry of Legislative Affairs—how that's going to interact with Infrastructure Ontario, as MPP Taylor had mentioned—making sure that we keep as much in-house, so that we are nimble, that we are able to really have our own fingerprint on this project. I want to see those relationships carry forward. I think that will be something that's very important our report-writing.

Maybe, Madam Chair, if no one else wants to—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I have a bit of a list still.

Mr. Mike Harris: Just make sure you get to me before we finish.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you, Mr. Harris. I'm looking at the time, as I've already learned from the Clerk that my watch is not the same time as everyone else's. So time check: How many minutes do we have left?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Seventeen minutes.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): So I have Mr. Sandhu, Mr. Oosterhoff—I'm putting myself on the list, because it surprises no one that I have a bunch of notes from yesterday—and then, Mr. Harris, we will return to you—

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Chair.

MPP Jamie West: Just one quick thing—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): So, Mr. West, then quickly before Mr. Harris, and then we will wait for that motion.

Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I will be very quick. Most of the stuff has been covered by my colleagues already. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the committee staff for organizing this tour. It was certainly very informative and gave us a sense and idea of the level of work that's being performed at the House of Commons and also gives us an opportunity to bring back that information to the team that will be performing that work at Queen's Park.

I really agree with MPP West's comment that most of us will not be here maybe in the next 10 years, but it's all about the legacy that we leave behind for the future parliamentarians. Most of the challenges we've faced in the last whatever time—four, four and a half years—those parliamentarians will not face those challenges in the coming years.

I also like the idea of sending a thank-you note to the staff or to the team that gave us a tour yesterday. I really want to thank the committee once again for organizing this tour.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I just wanted to build off a point raised earlier which is, I thought, really fair: that you can't have everything you want, and the concept of opportunity cost and trade-offs. So at the end, again, when we were in

the PMO, in the little corner office and Jennifer—I keep referencing her—she made the point of, “You're not going to get everything you want. You can't have as many nice committee rooms and nice offices and lounge spaces and public welcome areas. You just can't have as much as you want of everything, so there's going to have to be trade-offs.” And I think that we have to be very cognizant of that.

I know on the government benches, we all want legislative offices, because we're all walking from 438 University up or something like that. But maybe we can't have that if it means that we're not going to have a nice visitor space, or we're not going to have any area for public events. There are going to be trade-offs, and I think we need to be very cognizant of that, because if we think we're going to get everything we want, we'll be sorely disappointed. That was the one point.

The other point that I thought was really neat is, in some of the areas—and we're starting to do this as well, I've noticed, in ours—they had some really amazing Indigenous art, and I think that there was still a beautiful recognition of the founding stories of the French and the English that was evident in a lot of the architectural work. Ours is very, very British, in terms of the feeling of Queen's Park. I think there's an opportunity in this to make sure that we're not just reflecting where Queen's Park was when it was built, but also where this renovation—what it means to be an Ontarian today versus what it meant to be an Ontarian in the 1880s. So if there's a way that we can make sure we have that type of integration of Indigenous art and perspectives that I thought they were trying to do, I think that would be something we want to make sure we're doing—not that you want to redo everything, but integrate it.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. West.

MPP Jamie West: I promise to be really short. I just want to make sure we have change management on the record. I can't remember if it was brought up, but we heard it a lot yesterday. That was it, two words: “change management.”

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

I'm going to be as brief as I can and put myself on the list.

One of the big things we heard about was storage, which has been mentioned. They were talking about the inflationary cost of waiting to procure things, the beast that is procurement, as we heard yesterday; that waiting to buy certain things with the cost increasing—and also the availability questions versus buying it today and then paying exorbitant storage. There were some tough decisions there, and that was quite interesting, I thought. Also, I think—and it may be work that this committee chooses to do, about what the opportunities are in and around Queen's Park. What storage is already available? What could be used as storage that is available to government or available to the Legislature now versus leasing or in addition to that leasing? The storage was a big piece of their move and the logistics. While it was very clear that the decanting and actually pouring people right out of the space in order to

do the work was key, they did have some exceptions to that. So it will be interesting to see which parts of Queen's Park may, at which point—have to be the work done in situ and around what is happening at the time. So all of that, in terms of the committee's recommendation or, as Mr. Harris might talk about, the report—that was something.

What I would also add that we heard about yesterday from Mr. André Dupuis, who is in charge of operations, talked about the operations being last-minute, “Oh, and make that happen, make that work,” whether it was the support staff, the different—all of the things that happen at Queen's Park for us. But obviously here in Ottawa, there's a lot to consider. He was actually willing to do a bit of a summary for us. So I would put that on the list of things that perhaps this committee could request. He seemed amenable to that.

The feasibility study that we had heard referenced—Lisette Comeau talked about the feasibility study I would also—or feasibility report. It would be great to hear that.

As members have already mentioned, what today's members think is important—there were surveys that they have done broadly across Canada to the members, to the support staff. It might be of interest to this committee to ask for copies of the surveys, in my humble opinion—less so much the outcomes of the surveys, but more the type of questions, to maybe shape some of the thinking of the committee.

The only other thing I thought was quite interesting was the “unsympathetic changes.” That was the terminology for some of those not quite heritage, but maybe in recent history or in the last 20 years or so—repair work that has been done, sometimes cosmetic, sometimes structural, but that doesn't necessarily fit either with accessibility goals or heritage. So it's quite interesting, what they called the “unsympathetic changes”—and it will be interesting to see how many of those and what that looks like at Queen's Park.

I don't know whether that requires agreement of the committee to request those documents, or the expertise that was referenced and offered yesterday. Do we have agreement or any discussion to that? Okay, I'm going to table that.

1150

I'm getting head-nods, but I'm going to Mr. Harris, who's waving at me. Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I have no problem with that. The only thing is, I don't want it to impede our report-writing. I firmly believe that we need to make sure that we can start moving ahead with an interim report based on what we've heard. And if it takes a little while for that information to get back to us, I just don't want us to be waiting for that. I'm happy to have it, but as far as an interim report goes, I want to make sure that we're able to get that moving forward.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Hearing that and seeing the head-nodding of the committee, it sounds like there's a fair bit of work that can all happen at the same time. So if we do a follow-up with those individuals, we'll see what we get from them and when. That is all that

I had on—well, that's not all I have in my notes, but that's all I had on my list.

Returning to the speaking order: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: If no one else wants to jump in, I do have a motion that I want to move. Is there anybody else that wants to chime in? Mr. Hsu? Good?

Mr. Ted Hsu: We're here for you.

Mr. Mike Harris: We are. Ted Hsu is here for you. I don't know if anybody knew that, but make sure we get that in Hansard—setting the table.

Anyway, Madam Chair, I would like to move that legislative research prepare an interim report on the committee's study of the lifespan and of deficiencies with the building systems in the legislative precinct and the need for rehabilitation and restoration, and that the first draft of the report be sent to members of the committee no later than February 16, 2023, and that the committee meet for report-writing at the following times as needed: Tuesday, February 21, 2023, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m., and Thursday, February 23, 2023, from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I believe the Clerk is distributing copies of the motion. Mr. Harris has moved what I believe all members have here. Is there discussion or is there—yes, Mr. West?

MPP Jamie West: Just in terms of the timeline of February 16, I just don't know if there's any issues with staff preparing before that time. I know that they move heaven and earth all the time for us, but I just want to make sure there's nothing impeding that or nothing that we're unaware of that might make it more difficult.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I do have a question about this, Mr. Harris. This committee had also requested—after our tour of Queen's Park, we had requested of the precinct staff that they share with us a bit of a summary of what it was they had pointed out to us. Is that something that has been received, Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Yes, it was received and was distributed to members back in December or early January.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I wanted to make sure that that was something that members had seen before—okay. Is there further discussion to this? Mr. Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I don't know if this is the place that we're going to discuss it, but I was just wondering if we were planning on looking at any other Legislatures at all?

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Harris?

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, definitely working with our ministry to evaluate some potential other sites that we might be able to visit. Nothing concrete yet. We really wanted to kind of have this as our first stop and really get a good idea of the scope of everything. But if we looked at the jurisdictional scan that we had received a couple of weeks ago, we would certainly, I think, as the committee, be able to entertain some other options.

I may say, let's wait until the weather is a little nicer. But certainly, that would be up to the committee's prerogative to decide.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The only reason I raised that is because I think this is such an enormous project, which is on one level, and it might be beneficial to see, perhaps, some more similar-sized projects. Like, this is five times the size of what we're looking at, which is amazing, but I'm just saying, looking at something a little smaller.

Mr. Mike Harris: Chair, if I may?

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): You may, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, there are certainly a few options around Canada that have done some similar things, in scope, to what we're looking at. We're in a bit of an awkward space, because we're looking at doing a wholesale renovation, where most have just done some piecemeal upgrades here and there.

There are a couple of US sites, actually, that have done a pretty substantial overhaul. I'm thinking Minnesota was one. I think they had about a \$500-million project that they had done and put forward. I'm not sure about the committee travelling outside of Canada to be able to do things. I'm not sure where we land on that. I might defer to the Clerk.

There's definitely some interesting opportunities, but there aren't, from what I understand, a whole lot that are of the scope of what we're looking to do and/or are under way. A lot have finished already or are coming to completion. So I think we'd have to put our heads together as the committee and decide what would make the most sense.

Certainly, there's a couple of western provinces—I think BC and Alberta have done some fairly substantial renovations over the last 10 to 15 years. That might be a good place to start. PEI is an interesting one. I mentioned it earlier. They have a strange model where Government House there is literally an old house. They obviously don't have very many members, but they had started to do a small project that has now turned into—for them, I think it's about \$30 million or \$40 million, which is fairly substantial, from PEI's perspective. But they determined that the place was actually sinking into the ground, once they had started pulling back some of the facade and looking at what was going on. It's very interesting. And it's also owned, I think, by the National Capital Commission, which makes it even stranger. So PEI doesn't actually own their Legislature; it's owned by a federal agency, as a historic building.

There's certainly, I think, an option out there to learn a little bit more. Of course, preserving history pieces there is very important, being one of the first provinces in Confederation and where the Charlottetown Accord was signed, it's neat to see a lot of the history—of course, the east coast being one of the oldest parts of what we know as Canada.

Definitely, Madam Chair, if we are interested in doing something like that, from a committee perspective, I think we could certainly look at some options. My office would be happy to help provide some of those.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is there further discussion or questions about this motion? Just for a point of clarification, are we leaving it to the discretion of research what goes into this interim report? Are there areas

of focus that members are quite concerned about? Ms. Ghamari.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just have a quick comment. I know that a number of us have attended other Legislatures in the past. I personally attended the Legislature in Victoria, BC, on various conferences prior to COVID. I think maybe part of the report should also be doing a survey of members who have visited other Legislatures during the course of their activities as an MPP to see if they can provide any input or feedback on what they have seen as well.

I can tell you, when I was sitting in the Legislature in Victoria—it was quite small, but one thing I noticed was that each desk had plugs, which, to me, was huge, back in 2019. Maybe include something in there, just to do a quick survey of all the members and maybe even former parliamentarians who have travelled and visited other Legislatures and have had an opportunity to sit in a seat to get that sort of experience as well, and maybe share that as part of the report. It's just a suggestion.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Not to paraphrase, but the members' involvement and engagement, maybe—is that going to be a part of this particular interim report on the deficiencies, or is that going to be a further stage for committee?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Whatever the committee wants. It's just a suggestion to put out there, in terms of doing research or something.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Well, the multiple perspectives, we've certainly heard, have value.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: But I'll defer to the committee on that.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Harris?

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, I think when we look at what we're looking for from an interim report—obviously, legislative research has done many of these over the years, and I think they've heard the summary of what we've talked about and have been part of our previous meetings. It should, I would think, be focused on those conversations. And then, of course, when we get into the full report-writing that will be reported back to the House, we can certainly add some more of these types of comments and discussions in, for sure.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. So this motion is about an interim with this timeline. Mr. West, was there discussion?

MPP Jamie West: Earlier I had asked if there were any issues with the February 16th date for report-writing for the staff. Maybe it's just a comment on if there are any flags we should know about. I'm in favour of the motion; I just want to make sure that it's achievable.

Mr. Nick Ruderman: We're happy to provide whatever the committee requests in the timelines the committee requests them.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): If there is no further discussion, Mr. Harris made this motion which is in front of all members. Are members in favour of this motion? All those in favour? All those opposed? Okay. The motion carries.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's 12:01, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. Seeing the correct time on the correct clock, if there's no further discussion, this committee is in recess until 2:30 p.m. today.

The committee recessed from 1201 to 1431.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Good afternoon, everyone. We will now resume this meeting of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Just to reiterate, we are meeting here today as part of the committee's ongoing study of the lifespan of and deficiencies with the building systems in the legislative precinct and the need for rehabilitation and restoration.

Joining us this afternoon are members of the House of Commons administration team. Thank you very much for joining us. We have with us today Stéphan Aubé, chief information officer, and Susan Kulba, director general, real property. Welcome. You will have up to 10 minutes collectively for an opening statement, followed by up to 35 minutes for questions from members of this committee. I would ask each of you to please state your names for the record before you begin speaking. With that, I will turn it over to you.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Just trying to activate the mike, Madam Chair.

Interjections.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Oh, there we go.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, members of this committee. My name is Stéphan Aubé. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee on behalf of the House of Commons regarding the renovations of the parliamentary buildings. My name is Stéphan Aubé, as I said; I'm the CIO of the House of Commons.

You will ask, "Why is an IT guy coming here talking about renovations?" Well, I will tell you that IT will be important to your renovations in the future, but I will also say that we are here together, myself and Susan Kulba—I'm here with my DG responsible for real property, and we come hand in hand to this committee today because this is how these renovation projects need to be delivered. We need to think about the future, but at the same time, it's a full integration between the architecture and the technology moving forward, and hence the reason why we're here together today to speak to you about our experiences and some of the key success factors to deliver on such a program.

As CIO, I'm responsible for digital services, so anything from broadcasting, audio-visual, IT infrastructure, campus infrastructure—because we don't see renovation as facilities; we see renovations as a campus here on the hill. We actually have over 40 buildings that we need to worry about, and we don't look at facilities as one facility; we look at facilities as a campus, a campus of multiple facilities.

In addition to that, we're also responsible to the House of Commons, which is providing our requirements and providing inputs to the design process for these future facilities. So Susan and I work closely, hand in hand, with the delivery teams that deliver these renovations, but we represent the House from a requirements perspective and also as the key stakeholders in this initiative.

Today, Susan and I will speak briefly on four key areas of our renovation process that we believe would be useful and add benefit to your program, possibly, in the future. Susan and I have been involved through these renovations. We've been here—as you can see, a little bit of grey hair—for a long, long time, and this program that we're talking about here has been under way for the last 25 years. We've been involved since the beginning, so we can certainly talk to you guys and answer all your questions around what are some of the key success factors.

But we want to talk about four areas with you guys. We'll keep it simple, we'll keep it brief and we'll try to provide all the answers for the questions that you have moving forward.

The first part that I want to talk about is the work that we've done. The work that we've done started in 2001. If you go back 21 years, we spent a lot of time at the beginning with the members of Parliament, and also with the administrators and all our partners, talking about the vision of where we wanted to go. The ultimate goal for the House of Commons was to renovate Centre Block, but to renovate Centre Block, we had to go through major steps to get to Centre Block, meaning that we had dependencies that we needed to worry about and we had multiple projects that we needed to get to. Right now, if you look at where we're at, the chamber of the House of Commons is within the West Block, and so we needed to renovate West Block, which was an initiative that started over 15 years ago. But we're here today and we're operational, and there are many other dependencies that have to be dealt with. For us it was important to actually look forward and see where we wanted to go, which was Centre Block, and see what all the dependencies were to get to Centre Block.

As I said, our vision was developed in 2001. It was led by the public service, so we work closely with the government, we provide all the requirements and we act as a knowledgeable client within the renovations, but, actually, it's being led by the government, the public services branch of the government, which works closely hand in hand with us to deliver this program.

We do this in consultation with many partners. The key partners that we work with are the Senate, the House of Commons and the Library of Parliament, and collectively, as parliamentary partners, we provide the majority of the requirements. The rest of the consultation with external partners is done through public services.

The long-term vision for us set in place a common approach and cleared the path for all our stakeholders to implement the strategies for future MPs' accommodations and operational requirements within the parliamentary precinct. From an approach perspective, having this vision, we also felt that it was important—because if it's a 50-year vision or a 20-year or 30-year vision, it's important to break down that elephant into small pieces.

So the way that we've established our delivery methodology with the government is to establish a five-year plan from an investment perspective. We have five years of investment, rolling plans, so that we seek money, we measure ourselves, we learn from these five years, and we then move forward with delivery and execution around

these five years. After five years, we continuously review our plans and move forward. This allows us to learn, it allows us to continue to improve, but it also allows us to identify potential dependencies that need to be done before we get to the ultimate goal, which is Centre Block. That has allowed us to actually deliver many of our initiatives in a successful way, but at the same time improve and meet the requirements of our members, because the goal in the next 10 years is to go back to Centre Block and have the majority of our initial renovations done. But while recognizing it's not done, there are many other initiatives that will need to be done.

Having said that, the next thing that I just want to point out before Susan comes along is that the work that we've done is not just about facilities. The work that we've done is also about the campus. Now I'm speaking more as the CIO, from that perspective. When we look at the renovation of Centre Block, it's also about looking at the infrastructure that ties in all our buildings. It's also about tunnels to ensure the circulation of our goods, the circulation of food that goes across our organization. Do we have the right connectivity across all our buildings? So we looked at the strategy from that perspective, recognizing that we need to look at a campus perspective and identify all the other dependencies that need to be there, hence the need of having a strong vision.

Having said that, I'll pass it along to Susan so that we can quickly go through some of the other factors, and then we can answer all your questions.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Thank you. I'm Susan Kulba. As Stéphan mentioned, I'm the DG of real property, and I'm responsible for the day-to-day running of the facilities and the delivery of the LTVP on behalf of the House of Commons. As an architect, the executive architect for the House of Commons, I'm also responsible to ensure that the functional, the technical and the symbolic requirements of the House get incorporated into the program of work and that they're delivered in order to support the workplace of our Parliament.

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In that capacity, I can't do that on my own and so there's a couple of things I'll talk to quickly. One is governance, engagement and communication. For me to be able to carry out and keep things moving forward, we really wanted to make sure that we had proper governance in place. So, in March 2020, based on lessons learned from earlier projects, our board put in place an MP working group. That working group is not quite a subcommittee to the board, but it reports to the board, and it's chaired by the Deputy Speaker. It's where we go to really meaningfully engage with members of Parliament to really understand what their needs are at a more granular level and to inform them at a more detailed level. Because it's a smaller venue, we can get into a lot more detail to make sure that we're right on track and that we're actually designing and implementing a program of work for a facility and a campus that's going to suit them and suit the needs of the future. They, in turn, inform the board and make recommendations to the board on decisions, and then the board really provides the authority to move forward on those ideas.

Along with that, we have regular meetings with our Deputy Clerk and our Clerk and all the senior level of our administration. That's really important, also, to making sure that the requirements of all the service groups that support the House of Commons, that all their needs are being met at the same time.

The other thing about our governance is, because we're in this cross-institutional environment, we have cross-institutional governance. So, for example, we have a very robust governance that includes PSPC, the Senate, ourselves, the Library of Parliament, our precinct protective services and other stakeholders, when needed. We meet quite frequently with that governance level—DG and ADM on a weekly basis, and then we even have a deputy minister on a biweekly basis. That's how many decisions are coming on a project of this complexity. It's just a ton of information and a lot of people need to be involved—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Kulba—sorry to interrupt. Just to let the committee know, that is the end of the 10 minutes, but I'm going to look to the committee for direction so Ms. Kulba can continue as needed.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Please continue as needed. Thank you.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Thank you.

So along with all the governance—which is very helpful because it keeps things rolling at a good pace when we have authoritative decisions coming on a regular basis. Otherwise, things roll around and never get resolved and we're trying to maintain schedule.

Along with that communication, as I mentioned, the communication strategy and protocol are really key elements. Each of the partners have their own lane of communication and all that needs to be coordinated so that we at the House of Commons are making sure that our members of Parliament are kept informed and they have the information that matters to them, whereas public works, or PSPC, is really the entity that deals with public communication.

We also have found it very important to engage our members of Parliament and senators, the media and other stakeholders in tours of our buildings through all points: Pre-closure to see the state of the building, during the construction to see how things are going and post-occupancy to familiarize them with a new building. So I can't stress how important that has been to helping people understand why, how come, how much and why that money is needed. They really need to see it, and I'm sure you gained that experience today, as well.

The next thing is really about resourcing. We all have day jobs and members of Parliament and the administration are really here to support Parliament and what we've found is that we need a dedicated team of knowledgeable experts to be able to really get the design and the program of work outlined and implemented correctly. Under the Centre Block, we have established an integrated project delivery, which is kind of different for the public sector. It's done a lot in the private sector, but it's one of the first times PSPC has undertaken an IPO, and that brought together a big office of not only a PSPC team, but the House of

Commons, Senate, Library of Parliament, the design consortium team and the construction management team. So they're all co-located, they're on the same page, communication has enhanced, and our lessons from that is it's a really good methodology for this type of complexity. Not only are we in a heritage environment, we're in Parliament's environment. People don't understand Parliament very well out there when they're used to putting buildings together, so that would be one methodology to keep an eye on.

Our team is composed of dedicated architects, interior designers and project managers, and we found that the people we have on our team are very, very knowledgeable about how we operate in Parliament. And they almost act as translators between the end users of Parliamentarians and service areas with the design consortium, because design consortiums don't design or repair Parliament buildings on a regular basis.

Lastly, it's really about stewardship and lessons learned. I would offer that responsible stewardship in this environment is really about balance between heritage preservation and modernization; it's about balance between security and openness; the balance of workplace versus a public venue; a balance between budget and scope; and, of course, between quality, design and schedule. It's finding that fine line and threading it very carefully through all those concerns to make a successful project.

So I think that's really what we wanted to talk about. And otherwise, there would be just the lessons learned. We did reach out to other Parliaments. You've probably heard from some of the walk-throughs that we're part of an international network of parliamentary partners who are renovating, and we reach out to them and benchmark through that group on requirements versus costs, and things like that. We share ideas and learn from each other because Parliament really is a unique environment, and it doesn't compare to a hospital or a school or things like that. So we're happy to share lessons learned. We have books full of them, and we'd be happy to open a dialog. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you very much, and I know we are very pleased to allow the time required because we are very interested in your expertise.

And to that end, I know the members would have questions. Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you both for being here. It's really exciting for us to be able to hear, again, some of those lessons learned, best practices and challenges, I guess, that come along with those as we move forward in starting the journey that you guys have started 25 years ago, as we were saying on the way up here.

One thing that I haven't really heard a whole lot of yet in our deliberations and in our meetings with our federal counterparts here—what led to where we're at now? So as CIO, maybe a good segue into this would be—we've got CAT 5 cables running through holes in the walls that are just plowing through offices. There's electricity and live wires that are running in behind boiler radiators—all kinds of things that would never pass code these days.

I assume—now tell me if I'm wrong—that these were a lot of the same challenges that you saw. Walk us through

a little bit—and I don't want to monopolize the conversation, though we could probably have this discussion for the next hour. But tell us a little bit about what the state of the building was like when you really got into the nuts and bolts of moving forward with this project.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Madam Chair, if I can answer. For sure, I can have a few hours of discussion on this. We can share pictures.

But I will say that at one point, there are enough alterations that you can do to a facility to recognize where they are that you need to take a step back and look forward and say, "Where do we want to go?" And some of our facilities were being altered in a way like this, so it became a health and safety issue. Wires were being run on the floor. These facilities weren't planned for the requirements that the new members had and their changing environment, so we needed to take a step back and say, "Okay, it's all great. These buildings have been built more than 70 years ago," at the time when we're having this discussion, and "Where do we want to go, what do we want to do, and how do we want to allow flexibility for the members to actually have the services that they require, recognizing the evolving changes to this environment?"

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So, yes, health and safety became an issue. The facilities didn't meet the expectations of the members, for them to actually operate in a way that you guys are operating today, like here, as an example—and I'm sure you're televising with the province. That didn't exist at the time. So all of that needed to be done, and it needed to be done in a planned way. Hence, we said, "Let's go forward with a new vision."

Mr. Mike Harris: Can you give us a couple of examples? I'd like to focus more on, say, Centre Block, West Block, the core of the parliamentary precinct as we would know it. What are some examples of things that you saw that were major, glaring issues that you knew you couldn't hide anymore and you had to address?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Part of the issue is, our Parliament is growing over the years, and so we were running out of room in terms of committee rooms; we didn't have enough committee rooms. The state of the committee rooms was not in good shape. The facilities—we were just running out of room, and we had no way of accommodating those.

The other example that I could refer to were really technical issues. The mortar in the stone walls was falling out. The structural issues with the building were to the point where, on the West Block, we were getting reports that the tower could collapse, as an example, and the electrical transfer switch in the Centre Block—we were buying parts off eBay.

Mr. Mike Harris: We're doing the same thing.

Ms. Susan Kulba: That's the kind of state we were in, to the point where reports were commissioned to say, "By this date, your building will have a critical system failure." That's really the report that pushed everything forward, I would say.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: I agree with Susan.

Even from a services perspective, when in a committee room—these facilities weren't built with cabling, WiFi.

That didn't exist when these facilities were built. So we need to plan for the future of where we want to go, and the infrastructure has to be in there to enable whatever happens in the future. That wasn't there, so it also became a health and safety issue. We had cablings run everywhere on the floor, cafeteria-style tables. This is not acceptable for this type of working environment—

Mr. Mike Harris: It sounds a lot like Queen's Park. I hate to say it, but it does.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Well, that's where we were, sir.

Ms. Susan Kulba: We actually had a chunk of stained glass about this size and this thick fall out of one of the stained glass windows in the chamber. Luckily, it fell overnight and not when the chamber was in operation. That's the state of condition that it was in.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have a few people on the speakers' list: Mr. Sandhu, followed by Miss Taylor, followed by Mr. Hsu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, thank you so much for the presentation. We had the opportunity to tour the House of Commons yesterday, and we were really impressed with the level of work that's being performed.

You said the planning started 25 years ago. What were the main initial challenges—five main challenges that you would like to share with the committee?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That's a good question.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It may be a long list.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: It is a long list.

The first challenge, I would say, is governance. That's why we're speaking about governance today. How do we get the members involved, recognizing that in the House we have 338 opinions of where we need to go? How do we get consensus of where we want to go, what we want to do and how to move forward with this? There are multiple factors to recognize. There's the geography aspect of Canada, where we have members coming from across Canada. There's also the age aspect; people expect different levels of services based on how they consume services. There's also the political aspect; there are different opinions based on where you're coming from. So how do we bring people together and have the support?

I would say the biggest challenge is to have support from the members and oversight from the members while having a consistent approach, because as you know, we have elections in Canada every four years, and these plans are not about four-year plans. We have rolling plans for four years for investment, but we're making plans, for example, for the Centre Block, on a 10-year investment plan. We can't change this through the process. So I would say the first challenge was putting in place governance and having a continuity of investment across the next 10 years. I would say that's the first one.

Susan?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, I think another big issue at the very beginning were requirements. What was the baseline for requirements? Were we going to lessen our requirements for swing space? Were we going to make swing

space short-term or long-term to reuse—like, what was the investment that we really wanted to put in, and what were the true requirements? Because when you start something like this, you get a wish list. We were thinking, in a 100-year window, what's our wish list? But a wish list comes with cost. So getting everybody in agreement on what the scope was and what phasing should happen, which projects were more critical—those were some of the early challenges.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: I'll just continue building on this. I would say that the third thing for me is finding the balance. It's finding the balance between the technology guys that are just thinking of the future—these buildings are part of the Canadian heritage. So we need to find a balance between heritage and then, thinking about 50 years further, around how we're going to deliver services within these facilities while recognizing that we need to position ourselves toward that.

I would say these are the top three. We can go on, but I don't want to take up all the time, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I know that there are folks with other questions, so I'm sure you'll have an opportunity to expand upon that.

Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: Good afternoon, Stéphan and Susan. Thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing your expertise with us. It's certainly important and critical, and I know I'm grateful, as I'm sure the rest of the committee is, to be able to hear your perspective.

I'm curious; were your roles created particularly for this job and this endeavour, with the House knowing that this was where they needed to go? Were your roles created and, if so, what was the expertise that you brought to the table and your knowledge of governance—because, as we know, it's a different beast on its own—to be able to fulfill those roles?

Looking ahead, if we're going to be doing this, who are we looking at? How are we finding those right people to do the job? Are they already embedded in the Legislature, or are they people that we're looking for outside to be able to start the layers of process and bringing expertise in?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Do you want me to start?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Sure.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: I would say, Madam Chair, that you need a dedicated team. That's been part of our success. And it needs to be an integrated, dedicated team between the people that are delivering and the people that are representing the requirements. The House took a commitment and we made a commitment to actually have a dedicated team within the House, representing the members and consulting within our governance, hence Susan's team. Susan has a large team. Even from a technology perspective, we have a team that's dedicated to this process of the renovations, and there's a dedicated team within the governance to deliver the initiatives for Parliament.

I would say that it's very important, because that's their focus, and they then need to be supported and engaged through a governance that requires that the members also be involved, because you are the ones that are the decision-

makers, at the end of this. We're there to inform you guys of where things could go. We're a little bit of the continuity, you might say, through this process, and we act, as we call ourselves, as knowledgeable clients on your behalf. We're here to make recommendations, but the final decisions are within you, your space—

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for that. But I think I'm looking more specifically at: Were you already at the House of Commons in some sort of role or were you brought in particularly knowing that this was the vision going forward?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Stéphan was here—not as CIO at the time, because it was 20 years ago, but he was here in the technology stream and has continued to be involved. My role started small. At the time when the LTVP was being established, there was an office of about four or five architects and planners—really, the strategic thinkers to lay the groundwork. At that time, I was on the PSPC side, and the House saw the value of bringing somebody who was knowledgeable as an architect to sort of launch into the delivery side. That's when I joined the House of Commons team as an architect. The team has grown according to the program, and it will shrink once we get through some of the major works. But again, it's dedicated; there are architects, interior designers, project managers and, of course, administrative support. All those are really dedicated to the long-term vision plan delivery.

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They fit within our facilities team, and I have the responsibility for both of those. And we need that cohabitation, if you will, because the facilities team that manages the day-to-day really understands Parliament and the facilities that support them and have the linkages into the service groups. So the ones who are carrying out this work are dedicated, but they leverage the teams that exist within the House already.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just for the folks following along at home who might get tangled with some of the newer acronyms—because I have been asking the Clerk quietly—the PSPC is Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Yes. That's the branch, Madam Chair, that's accountable for the actual delivery of the program, recognizing we're the eligible client in that program.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. And as we learned yesterday, the LTVP is that long-term vision plan.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Yes, exactly.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): For Hansard's sake and for those folks following along or reading later.

Mr. Hsu is next, followed by Mr. McGregor. I saw another hand. Yes, okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Thanks for being here today. I've been told that one of the significant costs is security, like blast protection, things like that. I'm just wondering at what point—there must have been trade-offs in terms of security versus cost, and I'm wondering at what point these decisions were made and who was involved in making those trade-off decisions.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes. So we're treading carefully here because they're security discussions, but there are significant costs when it comes to modifying a building to protect against blast. It pretty much comes up on every project and building that we do. At the time, our security partners, whether it be our Sergeant-at-Arms office, the Parliamentary Protective Service and the Senate protection folks—they get together. There is a security working group formed who advise on that and ultimately bring the recommendations to the table. Yes, there are compromises, but they're all based on factual threat-risk assessments and the tolerance for risk, of course.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: It's about finding a balance, sir. As Susan just said, you need to find balance. This is an actual requirement that we need to address. We deal with it, and we find a balance between the two of them.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Hsu, anything further?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Are you able to discuss the timeline? Was this done early or late? Is it recommended to make these decisions early on?

Ms. Susan Kulba: The earlier the better, obviously, because those kinds of decisions impact structural design. And it's one of those chicken-and-egg things, because you need to have an idea of what's going in the building and how it's being designed to assess it from a security point of view; and then once you assess it, you have a recommendation, so that can kind of negate some of the design you may have done. So it's an iterative process. There's some done at the beginning and then it's followed all the way through the project.

But I think if you're—from a campus approach, there's always a TRA, a threat-risk assessment, done from the campus approach, and then as you determine and kind of narrow down your requirements, whether it be locations for things and buildings and where they are and what the setbacks are, then it gets more and more granular in terms of decision-making.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: And if I could add, Madam Chair, we have dedicated people from our security partners involved in these initiatives right from the outset of the project. They're part of the design process. They review and they provide input. The point of Susan is at one point there is a balance discussion that needs to happen, but security is not a compromise that we take lightly.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay, thank you.

Mr. McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: To our guests, thank you for not only being here with the committee and helping us navigate our own challenges but for all the work you do on behalf of our country and Canadian democracy.

One of the issues I'm trying to wrap my head around, and I think the committee is going to have to decide, is really around that governance model. We don't have the 25 years of history on this—we're kind of at that stage. Could you give us some tangible examples, knowing that we might not understand some of the technical terms, but what would be an example of a decision that gets handled?

This is probably a question for Ms. Kulba. But is there an example of a challenge that got handled at the staff level, an example of a challenge that maybe went up to public works, and then maybe a challenge that went to the working group where there was political participation? Are there any anecdotal ones? Just so we can wrap our heads around what kind of challenges are going to need different levels of authority.

Ms. Susan Kulba: I think you're right. There are day-to-day decisions happening at the project level which are going fairly smoothly, and they arrive at a design phase, and if there's anything controversial, it moves its way up the governance. But there's key ones that have been identified that must go all the way up to the board.

Some of the initial ones that do go up on a project are kind of the guiding principles. It's the marching orders. So at the project level, there's an agreement on a list of guiding principles, and then we'll table those all the way up to our board to make sure we're setting the framework straight for that program of work, and then we'll go back with key decisions all the way through.

One example I can give you from the West Block was, towards the end of construction, it was kind of dragging on a little. There was a move date set in mind and we felt—there was a little bit of tension because there was the need to move into the building, but we felt the building wasn't yet ready. It wasn't debugged. People hadn't been trained in the building. There was still technology that needed to be implemented and tested.

So that became a critical decision because it meant moving—rather than summer, when we have a big window where we could move, it would be pushed out to January, a one-month timeframe. So that decision went as high as the board. We explained the situation. We wanted to make sure that they were fully operational, and it was really their decision on staying with the Centre Block a little longer until the West Block was fully ready.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Could you give us a distinction between a decision that maybe gets made at the project level and one where you would bring in the ADM or the DM, those kind of more senior-official-side meetings? What's the distinction there?

Ms. Susan Kulba: So, again, anything around security would go up; around technology; anything where there's not quite full agreement across the table because we have so many stakeholders involved—all those would go up until resolved.

So the general layouts, I would say, like where the janitorial closets go, where the stairs and the washrooms go, that kind of thing, is at the project level. We have experts who design buildings and it makes a lot of sense. Where the MP offices are going versus how many we're losing—so for the Centre Block, because we're upgrading the building, that's taking up some of the base space, so we're losing MP suites—that kind of information and decisions around how many suites went up to the board.

I think another item would be in terms of the balance between heritage preservation and modernization. We've taken a number of those kinds of key decisions up the

board. So at one point, we're planning for future growth because of the Fair Representation Act, which tells us that our number of MPs will increase over time. We're at 338 and we're planning towards a number around 400, so that has a big impact in the chamber. Do we compromise some of the heritage components to fit everybody in, or do we find a way to change things that are less important, like maybe the seating, to fit everybody in?

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So options are developed at the project level and then we go up to the working group. We have some good, robust discussions there and deliberations, and then go forward with recommendations to the board. The board was very firm in their direction: The heritage needs to be preserved—so things like that.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Just for clarification, Ms. Kulba, when you're referring to the board, is that, as you had earlier referenced, the working group? Is that the Board of Internal Economy? Just so we're clear when you're saying "board."

Ms. Susan Kulba: The board is the Board of Internal Economy, which is our governing board at the House of Commons. The working group is the specific group that was created from members of Parliament from all parties, and they report and recommend to the board on this specific endeavour.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. Thank you.

I know Ms. Gallagher Murphy had indicated, and then Mr. Oosterhoff. No, not Mr. Oosterhoff; Mr. Rae.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Stéphan and Susan, for your experience, expertise and dedication to this project.

My question is really along the lines of, from a CIO perspective, planning for the future and future-proofing as far as technology is concerned. When we think about Queen's Park and we talk about all of these lines running hither and yonder, it kind of blows your mind, because I don't think there was that future thinking from technology to have everything wireless to whatever the case may be—the biometrics, what may be used in the future. So putting on that technology hat that you're wearing, how are you future-proofing and what lessons could we take from that?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Madam Chair, if I can answer this question: Do not select any specific technologies or solutions when you're building this building. Focus on the infrastructure that will allow you to make changes as required as technology evolves. That's the first requirement that I would say. I'll give an example: If you start integrating screen sizes into a wall and the screen cannot be purchased anymore, and because I designed a hole in the wall for 32 inches, I need to redesign the complete wall—that's not you want to do.

So it's really around working closely with the architectural team and focusing on the infrastructure; making sure that you are not committing to a specific technology and making sure that you are putting in place the infrastructure, meaning conduits to where we can actually enable things to happen. We focused on a campus approach: how we can enable things to happen across our campus to

different buildings and to the different rooms while being technology agnostic, because technologies will change. We live in a world where technology changes every three years, so if you try to build a solution on the technologies now and the project is going to last 10 years, you have three life cycles in front of you. So don't do that. Just plan for the infrastructure, making sure that you are enabled to do that, and wait until the end—as possible—before you select technologies.

We have a design process that is built this way. We look at things, we look at proofs of concept and we continuously evolve it through the project. Within the last three years—at one point, you will need to make a commitment, and then you make the commitment. But don't make it in the sense that this will be the future because we are here—these buildings are built for 50 years, so just make sure that these buildings will allow you to actually have multiple generations of technology. That's all I would say.

So there is a big, big, big aspect of planning from a campus perspective: How can I change without making major changes to the facilities? That's important for us, hence why Susan and I are here in an integrated way. We're always building solutions that will actually evolve over the time. That's what I would say you need to think about as a design criterion. Don't allow any technology folks to tell you, "Well, that's what's going to be here in 50 years." If they tell you that, that's wrong. I'm telling you that.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: That's great. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): For many of us who saw behind the scenes at Queen's Park, the wires and the voice-over-Internet protocol and things like that—obsolete technologies layered upon, as you said, multi-generations of technology.

Mr. Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to our guests for being here and answering our questions today and taking time out of your busy schedules. As my colleagues have mentioned, we were able to see Centre Block yesterday, so I know you're all very busy with the entire campus, as you're referring to, and the restorations around that.

Just for your knowledge, if you're not aware, most of my colleagues on the government side are parliamentary assistants. We actually don't have an office in Queen's Park itself, so we have no parliamentary office. This is a sticking point for members. I know, federally, even the ministers have a parliamentary office on the campus or the hill.

How are you, through all of this process—obviously, you've already alluded to, in Centre Block, the reductions; if you expand one thing, you're taking away another. How do you meet those obligations for the standard size of a member's office offering, and the number as well—in maintaining that through the process?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Thank you for the question.

Again, it's the campus approach, so we're downsizing the amount of offices within Centre Block, but we're renovating some of our other buildings where we're able to add offices, and through some of the swing-space projects, those have become permanent offices. For example, 180

Wellington and the Valour Building were both two administration buildings at the beginning of this whole plan. Those were renovated as temporary swing space for offices—but learning through the plan, we realized that we would need those in the long term, so those are now permanently accommodations for members of Parliament.

The West Block, in its second life—right now it's housing the legislative function, but some of that will move back into Centre Block, and those will likely become more ministerial suites since we've downsized in Centre Block.

And then of course, across the street, Block 2—I don't know if anyone talked to you on the tours about Block 2, but the buildings across from Parliament Hill are being redeveloped, and those are also going to become long-term parliamentary office units.

We haven't downsized. The standards were established, actually, before the LTVP in terms of a standardized member-of-Parliament office unit. We've maintained that standard through all our renovations. The only place we're varying a little bit will be in Centre Block, and that's due to the heritage considerations.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further discussion? I'm going to jump in. The logistics of storage was something that we heard a fair bit about yesterday, so as you're talking about swing space or various logistics needs outside of just office space or the actual move itself or whatnot—is there anything you would offer?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, we need a lot of it, more so because we have a lot of multi-purpose rooms. Our committee rooms are mostly all multi-purpose, so they accommodate multiple set-ups, whether it be a committee set-up, a theatre set-up, a reception set-up. So it comes along with a lot of furniture, and those set-ups have to change in very short periods of time. We could have caucus in a theatre style in the morning and have a committee in the same room in the afternoon, so the storage needs to be in an accessible location to make those turn-overs happen on a regular basis. Our operational groups fight very hard for a lot of storage to accommodate—whether it be furniture, technology; we have screens that come in and out of those rooms. It has become a big issue.

Of course, when you're working on a building, there's always a space crunch to fit all the requirements in. The first place people want to cut is storage, but if it leaves your buildings and your rooms non-operational, it's not a balanced approach.

Again, it's finding that thin line between accommodating the priority spaces but recognizing they all need support.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I want to go back to the governance piece that MPP McGregor was talking about—not so much maybe specific examples, but when we look at the different structures with the PROC committee—who we just had a chance to go over and meet with previously to our meeting here now.

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Of course, you're talking about the Board of Internal Economy; you're talking about working groups. From your perspective that you've seen over the 20 years of this

project, how has the PROC committee integrated with you on a semi-regular basis, I guess—obviously, it's not a regular basis—or ad hoc basis when something needs to be dealt with there? How are they integrating? Because I know the working group has more of a hand-in-hand relationship, and the committee is a little bit more on the edge. What's your take on how that interaction happens? And be honest, because we need honesty on this one.

Ms. Susan Kulba: So—

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just before you answer, can I get agreement from the committee—because we have a minute and 45 left that the subcommittee had decided was allowed for response. Can Ms. Kulba continue as required? Okay.

Please continue. Sorry. It keeps happening to you.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I mentioned, the working group was only created in 2020, and I would say that, prior to that, our engagement through the program was primarily with the Board of Internal Economy and probably, once or twice a year, with the PROC committee.

The issue with that was it was very high-level presentations. They weren't necessarily involved at a level of understanding that was really knowledgeable on the project, and so after the delivery of the West Block I think things became real. We moved into a new building, and the members of Parliament recognized they really didn't know what had been going on in-depth on the projects and had a lot of questions: "How did we get here?" and "Who made these decisions?" I think it was just timing of interest where everyone said, "You know what? We need a dedicated working group that could be involved at a more intimate level."

From my perspective, it's a really good thing, because I feel like we have continuity. We've gone through a couple of elections since the working group was formed. For the most part—there have been some changes of members—we do have that continuity and we have documentation on how we've arrived at all the decisions. It's very useful.

Mr. Mike Harris: Sorry, just to interject for a second: The Deputy Speaker is also part of that, correct?

Ms. Susan Kulba: Correct, yes—the Chair.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: Madam Chair, I would just say that it's a balance also. Susan just mentioned at the end that it's important you have a dedicated team overseeing this, because PROC has many other items on their agenda. But all these renovations will have an impact possibly on the PROC aspect, so they also need to be engaged. But we need to have a dedicated team through the board to actually make this happen, and hence the balance between the two, like what needs to go there and what needs to go

here. So we need to find a balance, and we require support from members.

No matter what the real decision is, you members need to be involved from an oversight perspective. You need to take your political aspect out and just oversee where we're going to ensure that we're doing the right thing for the Parliament.

Mr. Mike Harris: Great. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Very quickly: You mentioned earlier that in the initial stages there was co-operation from the members and senators. I'm just curious, were there any members and senators that were opposed to the idea?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: All I'm going to say to that answer, Madam Chair, is that it's complicated when you have two Houses who work sometimes with different requirements and agendas, but I will say we've been successful in balancing this, moving forward, and hence that governance.

And we didn't speak about it yet, but there's also a joint committee between the House and the Senate that's also brought upon whenever there's an item that touches the two institutions. So if ever there are requirements around a specific space that we need to come together, there's a specific committee that is brought together from the two institutions and we deal with that. Hence—I'm just reiterating the same thing—the need for having everyone around the table involved from all institutions.

But at the end, we're counting on the members to make sure that the direction is set for the future, because we don't want to go back in time and say, "Well, was it the administration that made the decision?" No, it was the members at the time that made the decision, and it was in the right context, and we may petition with moving forward in that direction.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you.

Ms. Susan Kulba: Yes, and I could just offer an example: some new spaces being created in courtyards within the Centre Block. The use of that new space went to that joint committee in terms of discussions and recommendations as to how that space will be used, whether it would be dedicated to either of the institutions, shared—those kinds of decisions. The project team comes up with options, and there are joint decisions on those kinds of questions.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Are there any further questions from members? If not, I would really like to thank both of you for appearing here today and sharing your perspectives and your expertise, sharing your insight. You've given us a lot to take back, so thank you very much.

If there is no further business for this committee? Seeing none, our committee is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1526.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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Ms. Jennifer K. French (Oshawa ND)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

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Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)

Ms. Jennifer K. French (Oshawa ND)

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Ms. Christine Hogarth (Etobicoke–Lakeshore PC)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles L)

Mr. Graham McGregor (Brampton North / Brampton-Nord PC)

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff (Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest PC)

Mr. Matthew Rae (Perth–Wellington PC)

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu (Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest PC)

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Mr. Christopher Tyrell

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Research Services