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• (1120)

[*English*]

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): We'll get this meeting started.

Welcome to our second meeting.

[*Translation*]

Our first meeting was a bit quick, but everything went well.

[*English*]

The first order of the day is the minutes of the previous meetings. Has everyone had a chance to look through them? Are we okay with them? For business arising from previous meetings, is there anything that should be brought up?

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chief Opposition Whip): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do appreciate how rushed the December meeting was for reasons that the Conservatives certainly remember. I did ask a question that I wanted to get some clarification on, just because when I went back I couldn't make the numbers work. Again, I know we were very rushed.

I did ask a question about the reduction in the allotment in the estimates for the Office of the Deputy Clerk. There's a reduction of nearly \$200,000 for the personal office of the Deputy Clerk-Procedure, André Gagnon. At the time, I was told that this was because of a reallocation of the Press Gallery Secretariat to the Office of the Deputy Clerk-Administration. However, looking at that, it happened in the previous year.

I would that either to be clarified now or for it to be flagged so that someone can give me information on what that difference is, because I believe we were talking about different years when the Press Gallery Secretariat was explained as the reason for that. I'll just flag that. I don't expect that the clerk was expecting that question today, so if I can just put it on the record that I would like to get some more information on that, I'd appreciate it.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Yes.

Can we answer it now?

Mr. Charles Robert (Clerk of the House of Commons): No, we'll look into it. I want to make sure that we provide you with correct information, so rather than doing something off the cuff, I will come back to you.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

Are there any other questions concerning the business arising from previous meetings?

[*Translation*]

There aren't any. We'll move on to the third item.

[*English*]

Ratification of a walk-around special committee.

[*Translation*]

If there aren't any questions, we'll continue.

[*English*]

Everyone's in accordance. They've already signed.

We'll move on to number four, parliamentary precinct

[*Translation*]

We have two speakers addressing the fourth item, which concerns the long-term vision and plan for the parliamentary precinct. These speakers are Michel Patrice, deputy clerk, and Stéphan Aubé, chief information officer.

Gentlemen, you have the floor.

Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, Susan Kulba will start. She and Ms. Garrett will provide an update on the activities that have taken place since our last presentation in June.

[*English*]

Ms. Susan Kulba (Director General, Real Property, Real Property Services, House of Commons): Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the board.

Today, as Michel said, we're joined by Jennifer Garrett from PSPC, the director general responsible for the Centre Block program, and Duncan Retson, the ADM at PSPC. We will be providing you with an update on the LTVP for the rehabilitation of the Centre Block since we last met in June before the summer break and election. We have a small presentation.

Mr. Patrice will be speaking to parliamentary engagement and the way forward. When we were last here, we were joined by the working group members tasked by this board to work with us as a means of engaging the Parliament and in the decision-making for the LTVP. At that time, there was a recommendation to proceed with the construction hoarding location and to develop the design for the interpretive panels. A recommendation for a scalable approach on the size of our welcome centre was also approved to allow Public Works to move forward with the project while allowing us time to engage with parliamentarians to develop the final functional requirements. We have been working together with PSPC over this time, doing our homework and preparing information and options for that engagement.

In parallel, there has been a lot of activity going on, and Jennifer will speak to that in a little more detail. As we move forward with the functional programming and schematic design, there will be a fair number of key decisions requiring engagement and approval. We will bring to your attention some of those key elements and approaches to developing conceptual options so that we can continue to engage parliamentarians in revitalizing the Centre Block. Our goal is to ensure that we achieve an optimal balance between restoring one of the most important heritage buildings in Canada and ensuring that it meets the future needs of parliamentarians.

I'll pass it on to Jennifer.

Ms. Jennifer Garrett (Director General, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)): Good morning, everyone.

The Centre Block rehabilitation is a pinnacle project of our current long-term vision and plan, which is also under update.

In terms of the program, it remains on track, and several key milestones have been accomplished since our last engagement with BOIE. Enabling projects are largely now complete, allowing the construction manager the ability to commence demolition and abatement activities in support of both the rehabilitation of the Centre Block and construction of the phase two visitor welcome centre. We've commenced the excavation of underground infrastructure to ready for large-scale excavation activities that will come in the near future.

The comprehensive assessment program to understand the building condition is now complete. Results of this program will be outlined later in this briefing and have been integrated into the ongoing schematic design process. This program has provided valuable information and enabled the team to safely commence the demolition and abatement that I referred to earlier.

In collaboration with the administration of the House of Commons, we have advanced the functional program and launched the schematic design process. We are now at the point of input for parliamentarians in order to make the key decisions that have been referenced and will be discussed later in this presentation, to allow completion of the schematic design process and continuance of the rehabilitation program.

The rehabilitation of the Centre Block endeavours to provide modern accommodations to support parliamentary operations while retaining core heritage elements of the building. The scope has two

main elements. The first is to modernize the Centre Block so that it can support parliamentary operations well into the 21st century.

The second is to construct phase two of the visitor welcome centre, which will primarily do the following. It will establish a safe security screen outside the Centre Block building footprint. It will provide additional parliamentary support space. It will connect the triad, the Centre Block, the East Block and the West Block, into one integrated parliamentary complex. It will enhance parliamentary outreach by providing a curated parliamentary visitor experience program that will supplement the current tours that are ongoing on the Hill.

The visual that you see on your screen represents a high-level visual impact of how that visitor welcome centre enables the connection of the triad into one parliamentary complex. It will not necessarily be constructed in that actual footprint.

A very big aspect of reducing risk on a large-scale heritage program like this rehabilitation is to find out as much as possible about the building and to have that information influence the schematic design and downstream construction activities. Based on lessons learned and a best-practices approach, the assessment program for this rehabilitation has been the most comprehensive undertaken to date in the precinct.

The program was launched in 2018 before the relocation of parliamentary operations from the Centre Block to the West Block, but given the invasive nature, the program significantly increased in momentum and was completed once the Centre Block was emptied. This program, as I indicated, is now at an end, and its findings have already been incorporated into the schematic design process.

Just to give you a sense, here is a summary of the key findings that we have taken out of the program, but maybe I'll just bring to the attention of the members that it's a highlight of the few high-level key takeaways.

We have gained a comprehensive understanding of the heritage elements, which will enable the project team to develop a robust restoration strategy. We have determined that the underlying structural steel is in better condition than expected in many areas, which will create efficiencies during the structural reinforcement process. We know where the underground infrastructure is, the associated site conditions, and we are now clear for digging from an archaeological perspective. We know, in great detail, the type and location of designated substances, so we can develop a comprehensive abatement strategy.

- (1125)

The biggest challenge, the key challenge for us that has come out of the assessment program—and it's not insignificant—is that we were really hoping that, when we started to dig behind walls and look above ceilings, we would find some room to provide modern building infrastructure like heating and cooling, and unfortunately, we have found very little space to run these services.

Despite this, we will be able to address these challenges. We will just have to use innovative approaches to do so, and we are already working with organizations like the House of Commons administration, their IT PMO organization and our designer to address the challenges and find ways to run modern services through the building.

The building modernization is only one aspect of the program. As previously indicated, we've been working with parliamentary administrations on their respective parliamentary functional programs. In this case, this also involves the Senate of Canada as a key client, and the Library of Parliament. We are at the point now where we're coming to you today to start the engagement process to get your views and incorporate them into the decision-making process to ensure that the building, when it is returned to you, not only functions from a building modernization perspective but also effectively meets the needs of parliamentarians well into the 21st century.

From a design perspective—and we will get into more key decisions later on in the presentation—we are facing challenging decisions such as the size and configuration of the House of Commons chamber, including public lobbies and galleries, and the space and location of parliamentary offices and committee rooms throughout the new complex.

For the visitor welcome centre, we're looking to establish, with your input, the size and operational functionality of that facility and to consider the location configuration and entry points for both public and parliamentary business into that complex.

At this point, I'm going to transfer the presentation back to my colleague, Susan Kulba, to take you through the chamber.

- (1130)

Ms. Susan Kulba: Thank you, Jennifer.

The House of Commons chamber is one of the most significant spaces in the Centre Block. It's where Parliament resides, it's where you work. It holds symbolic and traditional significance to Canada, and it's one of the most recognized spaces within the building. It's one of the key elements that will require some consultation.

The House has been working with PSPC and design consultants over the break to do our homework, notably with respect to the chamber galleries and lobby, so that we could be well prepared to engage and start the conversation with parliamentarians about these spaces. The chamber requires change. We need to consider the long-term use and the investment and focus on what kind of change and how best to achieve it.

Our approach was to start with basic information on the existing chamber, the Fair Representation Act, and feedback we have re-

ceived to date from parliamentarians, including PROC. There are a number of common trends from members so far.

In doing our homework, we have considered the Fair Representation Act, which came into effect in 2015, and it indicates that the average demographic projections would put the MP count at about 460 in roughly 50 years from now. By the time we return to Centre Block, the projections could put the number of MPs in a range of 350 to 370.

Knowing that the growth will need to be accommodated for future parliaments, there are a number of considerations to help achieve that. We could change the seating and the furniture; we could adjust procedures to be more flexible; and/or we could increase the size of the chamber.

These considerations emphasize the tension between space, functionality, accessibility and heritage. Key decisions regarding the chamber are required early in the project and during schematic design, because this direction will impact the structural design, which comes first.

We will also need to consider many of the elements in terms of life safety. They don't currently meet code, and we need to take all that into account while we're considering other factors.

There will need to be interventions to the heritage fabric of these spaces to accommodate the many requirements. What will be important is how we do that. We need to do it in an appropriate manner. We need to do it respectfully and in a complementary way to the original Pearson design while building a new layer of lasting heritage relevant to your time in Parliament and the history of the building. To do that successfully, we need to have great consultation with parliamentarians.

Given the challenge of addressing all those issues, we have undertaken studies on the chamber with all that basic information, and we have developed options to demonstrate the range of possibilities. Those options are at a conceptual level, but we would like to engage further with in-depth consultations to develop the direction on which way to proceed.

As mentioned earlier, the visitor welcome centre had preliminary approval by the board for a scalable size so that Public Works could continue with the project, but we still need to come back and work on the functional requirements with the House of Commons, the Senate, the Library of Parliament and PPS.

The building is a welcome centre and is an important element for security and interconnection of the buildings on the Hill, which all work together to accommodate the key functions of Parliament.

Over the break, the parliamentary partners continued to work with PSPC on two key elements of the visitor welcome centre: first, to refine the functional requirements and further develop the three options for consideration and in-depth consultation, and the final program requirements to determine the final size; second, to study the entrance design strategy to ensure that the visitor welcome centre phase 2 works in concert with the existing buildings and key entrances, which will remain in Centre Block, and to focus on providing secure and efficient entry for parliamentarians, business visitors and the public while meeting the operational functionality and considering intervention in the heritage landscape.

We will be seeking input from parliamentarians on the review of the public entrance and your requirements for meeting and greeting constituents in the visitor welcome centre. We will be discussing in depth the advantages and disadvantages of each to ensure that the most suitable option is pursued for further development in the schematic design.

Thank you.

● (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Patrice: We've outlined the decisions that we believe parliamentarians should be involved in and consulted on so that they can share their opinion and ultimately make a decision. A number of decisions will be required in the coming months to continue making progress on the project.

[English]

It's not my intent to go into all of those decisions. Obviously, the objective of this meeting is not to get one decision on any of those topics, but just to give you a sense of what needs to be reviewed in designing the program and designing the building. I would say that governance is more the objective, in terms of putting that on the board's agenda to discuss and obtain direction on where the board wants to go.

In a simplified way, the governance for the parliamentary precinct involves many players.

[Translation]

First, the legislative power, in this case the House of Commons, determines the requirements for buildings and offices.

The executive power is the custodian and is responsible for carrying out projects and implementing budgets.

There are obviously other stakeholders, including the Department of Canadian Heritage, the National Capital Commission and the City of Ottawa.

[English]

The devil's in the details. That's simplified, but when it's time to really get to answers and discussion, the decision becomes a bit more complex. The parliamentary administration is the lead for engagement with parliamentarians. It is our responsibility to ensure

that members are properly engaged to allow for effective decision-making as it relates to defining the requirements of your workplace for the next 100 years.

Historically, the board has been the decision-maker for LTVP and related projects.

[Translation]

In the previous Parliament, for example, the board appointed a working group that was created to help it make decisions. This concerned the excavation required for the future Visitor Welcome Centre.

We remember the discussions. It may not have been a perfect model yet, but the fact that you were kept informed and that you received help with making decisions was a step in the right direction.

[English]

I have reflected quite a bit over the past year on what could be an efficient decision-making process that would ensure that members are engaged in the level of details both on the requirements and potential cost of options.

[Translation]

Obviously, you must receive enough information to ensure that you're satisfied and assured that any potential decision will be made with full knowledge of the facts. In my view, our obligation as an administration is to act transparently and to respond to your requests and concerns.

I would add that our job is to make recommendations. Your job is to study them.

● (1140)

[English]

I believe that the working group named by the board is a good model, but we also need to reflect on the interplay with PROC, which also has an interest in the Centre Block or the projects. For example, as Susan has mentioned in terms of the chamber, one of the big decisions that will need to be made is whether or not to expand the chamber. This has implications and I believe it merits the necessary study by members to arrive at a conclusion. I believe that PROC would be well placed to do that kind of study and make recommendations to the board.

For example, if the decision is not to expand the chamber, we know because of the growth in the number of MPs that the rules will have to be adapted. Because of the growth in those numbers, assigned seating will no longer be possible. There are all sorts of procedural implications that would need to be examined with respect to the rules.

I believe that another aspect could be the level of effort for other types of decisions, as we did in the past for the visitor welcome centre, for example. I suggest that for a series of the decisions, it will take hours of iterative discussions between members, the administration and Public Works, so that the members, whoever they are, feel they have all of the information necessary to make a decision in the best interest of the House of Commons, and also Canadian taxpayers.

I would suggest that the level of effort, in terms of the members engaged in that exercise, would be a minimum of probably two hours per week.

I'm leaving you with that at a very high level. That's how I see the way that everybody could work in a complementary fashion in a working group, PROC and the board itself. I will leave it at that.

I am ready for questions.

Hon. Anthony Rota: We have a running list for questions and comments, with Mr. Holland, followed by Mr. Rodriguez.

We'll start with Mr. Holland.

Hon. Mark Holland (Chief Government Whip): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair/Mr. Speaker.

I am confused about which title to use.

I have a couple of things. First, thank you for the work done to date. This is a project that I think is near and dear to the hearts of all parliamentarians, but really Canadians. It is the symbol of our democracy in this country and it's not only an enormous expenditure of money, but this building represents a critical piece of heritage that I think all Canadians are invested in.

On that basis the consultation that is going to take place is exceptionally important, not only for the stakeholders who are going to be using the building—members of Parliament, staff, House officials, media and the public—but also, I think, because that heritage represents something important to people who never step foot in the building. We shouldn't lose sight of that.

When we're trying to think about how it functions for the purposes of our work, what that heritage means to the nation, I think, is incredibly important and, therefore, I have particular opinions. I won't go into them for long, but my viewpoint is that not a lot should be changed, and we have to try to work within the existing heritage.

I think a body does need to be created. A couple of things concern me on that. One is that we don't want to have two parallel processes with PROC and BOIE where we have two decision-making bodies where there is confusion.

I think the solution to that...and I am not suggesting we do it today, but I think we are probably going to need to do it very soon, is to have have a meeting of the Board of Internal Economy in the week that we're back to make sure that we get this issue done.

When you start working back in those timelines, I'm hearing that we have to have a decision on the size of the chamber before we leave for the summer. If you think about our setting up the committee and that committee having its meetings and hearing from peo-

ple, then it has to take that decision to BOIE. We don't have a very long timeline, even if you triage those decisions on the basis that they need to be made on a prioritized basis.

I think one of the answers could be to have a committee that's populated with members of PROC and if there are people from BOIE who want to be on it, fine. We'll have to talk about its size and composition, but it would report back to this body, as the decision-making body. There would have to be a body that makes recommendations as opposed to just hearing input, because my fear would be that they would have all of these consultations and then we'd just get data dumped back at BOIE and we'd be left trying to thrash out all of this and we simply don't have the time or enough meetings to be able to do that work.

It would be my hope that the body would make recommendations to BOIE. It could be composed of members of PROC; therefore we'd have one decision-making channel. But given the timelines involved—and maybe we could flesh those out—am I correct in stating that without incurring costs and significant delays, we need to make a decision on the size of the chamber before we leave in June?

• (1145)

Mr. Michel Patrice: Yes.

Hon. Mark Holland: Okay, so just draw that backwards. That's not a lot of time.

I haven't had a chance to speak with my colleagues around the table, so I'm not suggesting that we make that determination today. That said, given the calendar and how it looks for March, I don't think we can put this off until the end of March when we meet because, by the time, we then constitute a committee and won't meet until mid-April. That gives it a couple of weeks to have consultations; that's not acceptable.

I have outlined my thoughts on it. I am open to other ideas, but I think we have to come to a determination and create that body when we come back after the constituency week in two weeks' time.

The only other point I'll mention is a question related to the relationship with the Senate, because some people are saying that we need to have this be a joint body with the Senate. I have some concerns with that because I think it's going to slow down the process.

In your conception, if we had two different bodies that were making recommendations, how would that input be consolidated into one decision? Is there a need to have that consultation on a joint basis, or if it were done separately, how do you metabolize the recommendations from both those bodies in such a way that they're not contradictory?

Mr. Michel Patrice: Being a shared building and a shared facility obviously creates another level of complexity with each House setting up its requirements, so it could have an impact on the overall project. As to how those dialogues take place between the two Houses, frankly I don't really have a response.

I'm going to talk about myself here. Our responsibility is basically to come to you with proposals and options, and listen to what your requirements are and what is the most taxpayer-responsible approach to what we're going to propose.

For example, if you look at the plans in the past in terms of the vision for the visitor welcome centre and the House of Commons requirements, one of the latter was that there be committee rooms in the visitor welcome centre. The team reviewing those requirements surveyed the committee rooms that we have across the precinct and the new committee rooms in this building that have been put online, and it is our collective view that we don't need committee rooms in the visitor welcome centre. We're well served with what we have around our facilities.

That is the type of work that we can do and the challenge for us that we need to address in terms of the requirements. Therefore, committee rooms are no longer a requirement for the visitor welcome centre.

I suspect that the other chamber may do exactly the same, but I cannot speak to that.

Hon. Mark Holland: My thoughts are that this is so big that we can't get very deep into any of the details or we're going to get lost and never out of here. As expeditiously as possible, we need to create the body that is going to be responsible.

We need some time to talk among ourselves about what that body will look like. I have really big concerns about having a joint process with the Senate, but I don't necessarily want to get into that discussion now.

My thought would be to have a special meeting of BOIE the week we come back, two weeks hence. That would give us an opportunity to talk about exactly how that body would be composed, and then come back and make a determination in two weeks.

That would be my recommendation.

• (1150)

Hon. Anthony Rota: Next on the list is Monsieur Rodriguez, followed by Ms. Bergen, Mr. Julian and then Madame DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rodriguez, you have the floor.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

First, just to refresh my memory, could you describe the consultation process with parliamentarians for this building?

Second, I gather that this space will be turned into a committee room later on. Is that right? If so, there's no real need for these

types of rooms in the future Centre Block. Are there still discussions about this issue?

Lastly, you said there would be 460 members of Parliament in 50 years. Did I hear that right?

[*English*]

How many MPs will there be in 50 years from now?

Ms. Susan Kulba: That is the average: 460 MPs. It's based on the census projections by Stats Canada and the Fair Representation Act.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: If we're talking about a 100-year plan, we have the number of 460 MPs in 50 years from now, but aren't we supposed to be working on the whole period of time?

Mr. Michel Patrice: Obviously, these are projections. We suspect that there's a point in time when Parliament will modify the—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The rules.

Mr. Michel Patrice: —the representation and the balance, but we have to work with certain figures. For example, if you look at one of the plans for this chamber, it was projected that there would be 320 MPs, and we're now at 338.

These are projections based on population growth, and so on.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You will need 230 MPs for a majority. That's just to say, because I won't be here in 50 years.

Mr. Michel Patrice: That's a projection, but as I said, obviously there are many things that can happen between now and then in terms of changes in the number or representation formula, and all of that.

[*Translation*]

What was your first question?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It concerned the consultation on this building.

Mr. Michel Patrice: I'll give you my personal perspective on the consultation, because I wasn't here when the plans were made.

Basically, the decisions were made in such great detail that I would have found it appropriate for the parliamentarians to be consulted. However, the House of Commons Administration made those decisions.

The Board of Internal Economy has indeed, on several occasions, seen plans that I would describe as high level. However, when it came to things that mattered, such as office allocations and things of that nature, the parliamentarians weren't consulted. For example, the office allocations were done by the administration, which I find deplorable.

In terms of committee rooms, we do have four committee rooms in this building. One of the House plans includes a model that proposes the possibility of transforming the House by adding a floor and more committee rooms. However, at this point, it would be too early to say that this will happen, because we don't know the needs of the House 10 years from now. That said, we've built in some flexibility so that we can adapt the House to meet our needs when we return to the Centre Block.

I think that I answered your questions.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes, thank you.

[English]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Ms. Bergen.

Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of things. First of all, I agree with much of what Mr. Holland said in terms of suggestions.

I'd like you to clarify your suggestion, Mr. Patrice. You mentioned that the group you were referring to needed to spend a minimum of two hours a week on this. Are you suggesting that there be a subgroup, away from this group? Perhaps you could repeat and clarify what you think would be a good solution to consultation.

Then I have another comment.

Mr. Michel Patrice: I talked about a subgroup of this group, but it could be another committee established using a different route. Definitely it would be a group that would delve into the details of the project. I estimate that the level of effort required for that group in terms of meeting time would be a minimum of an average of two hours per week, because quite important discussions need to be had. The members, I suspect, as this happened with a past working group, will say that they need or want more information on a cost scenario and things like that. Then we need to prepare it, and then we meet again to pursue the discussion.

• (1155)

Hon. Candice Bergen: This is just a suggestion, but would it be helpful, after we maybe have another meeting and have some more discussions, if BOIE set out some guiding principles? For example, I think we've heard continuously that we want the House of Commons and Centre Block to be preserved as close to what they were when we left them, or as close to the same point. If that is the guiding principle, that answers many, many questions.

Is that something that would be helpful? If we set out...and maybe you come back with some of those guiding principles. Within those parameters, the working group, however it is established, would in a sense have fewer decisions to make.

Mr. Michel Patrice: Yes.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Hypothetically, if that would be the guiding principle, then more floors probably wouldn't even be part of the equation.

I'm just throwing it out there as a suggestion. If we maybe establish some overall guiding principles and say, "Don't go out of these parameters", then that would reduce some of the decision-making at the decision points.

Mr. Michel Patrice: Definitely guiding principles are always helpful in terms of guiding any person in decision-making. We presented draft guiding principles at the last meeting in June. We could distribute those again in a working document. You could then work on them in terms of, for example, the one that you're talking about.

Guiding principles are helpful. That being said, it's when you get into the granularity of things that guiding principles don't cover

things. That's why the engagement with members is very important to us.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Yes, I agree. Maybe "guiding principles" is the wrong term. I think some specific parameters would.... When I look at some of the decisions that have to be made, they go all the way from keeping the House of Commons structure exactly as is to changing it drastically.

Mr. Michel Patrice: That's right.

Hon. Candice Bergen: If we say we don't want it to be changed drastically, for example, then many of those decision points will be taken off the table—

Mr. Michel Patrice: Yes.

Hon. Candice Bergen: —so I was thinking more specifically.

Mr. Michel Patrice: Yes.

[Translation]

Hon. Anthony Rota: I'll now give the floor to Mr. Julian. Ms. DeBellefeuille will speak next, followed by Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the New Democratic Party): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I looked carefully at the entire document. I want to thank you for providing all this information. However, I don't see the budget figures. Is it because Public Works and Government Services Canada didn't provide approximate amounts for each option?

Mr. Michel Patrice: The construction manager, meaning Public Works and Government Services Canada, is responsible for the budgets.

I'll ask Ms. Garrett to explain the absence of costs at this stage.

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: We really do understand that cost is a critical factor in determining and informing the decisions along with other key aspects like, as you indicated earlier, the heritage interventions and things like that. We would never ask parliamentarians to make decisions without understanding those cost details.

In terms of the functional programming, we are here to start the engagement process to see if we have those options right in terms of their functional capabilities to support parliamentary operations. From there we are happy to re-engage and come back to provide you cost ranges on what that might mean. We are at step one of a further discussion about cost to help inform the decision-making process.

The other aspect is the comprehensive assessment program. It's also a key factor in what we learned about the building and what that will involve in terms of modernization. The combination of the functional program and the base-building modernization ultimately inform a building scope, and it's only from there that you can base-line your cost scope and schedule. As you can imagine, there's a very big difference, just to take the chamber, for example, between remaining within the existing chamber versus completely deconstructing a very significant portion of the building and rebuilding it.

We are really not trying to not provide those details, and we're happy to come back with that information. We just need to know and get a better sense, as part of the initial engagement, as to whether the hard work we've done at the staff level with the House of Commons administration is landing in terms of options that make sense operationally for Parliament.

• (1200)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for that.

There's no doubt that this is important to Canadians; it's the centre of Canadian democracy. At the same time, among those at this table, I represent the riding that's farthest away from Ottawa and most of my constituents will never come to Ottawa. They'll never see the House of Commons and Parliament Hill.

It's about making sure that we do justice to the Centre Block and to the importance of Parliament, but I would certainly disagree with any Cadillac approach where we're putting excessive funds into the building. I think, coming back to the comments that Ms. Bergen and Mr. Holland mentioned—I would agree with both of them—that we need to establish those principles as a starting point so that going into this, we know that we can provide direction. Perhaps, since we don't have the figures in front of us, it's very difficult to even imagine the scope of the project right now, but putting those principles into place can make a real difference.

As Mr. Holland mentioned, moving forward quickly is important because there's also a cost element to not making those decisions. I was part of the building committee that met prior to the election. We basically went with the stripped-down option, but that allowed for some flexibility about decisions post-election. The longer we delay the decisions, the more costs there are for the taxpayers. It's about finding that balance, moving forward immediately with the principles—I agree with Mr. Holland on that—and meeting in a couple of weeks.

I also agree with Mr. Holland on his real reservations about having a joint process with the Senate. We're the elected members. We're the ones who will have to justify decisions back to our voters, perhaps in a few months, perhaps in a few years, so I think, because of that, that there is a principle to our hearing from them but also providing the leadership on that. Moving forward quickly will be important. We'll move forward with principles so we can get this right and in a way that is reasonable to people across the country, including in New Westminster—Burnaby. People will say that we got it right on the House of Commons and Parliament Hill. It's a good building, and we didn't spend excessively to preserve the heritage and the symbolism that is the Parliament building.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

[*Translation*]

Ms. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Whip of the Bloc Québécois): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, Mr. Patrice, I want to thank you for the quality of the documents that we received in advance. As a result, we can better appreciate today's presentation.

I gather that you're inviting us to take a step forward rather than to simply participate in a committee. This process would continue over time. The process, which has started, would not end with our Parliament, but rather in several Parliaments.

I also understand that all recognized parties in the House of Commons are committed to working in a committee. Regardless of whether the whips or leaders change, the work must continue. In this way, the administration and the experts in the House will shape the new Parliament, with the support and advice of the members who spend a great deal of time there, sometimes even more time than in their own homes.

Perhaps we'll soon resolve one of your issues, and there will be 78 fewer seats in the House of Commons.

We think so, don't we, Mr. Rodriguez?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It will require a referendum.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: That's it. That may be one of the solutions.

All kidding aside, I agree. I share Mr. Holland's view that we should have a joint committee. I think that it's easier for you and for us to be together and to share our common concerns.

We can't be against a guiding principle. However, as a whip, I would like to have known one thing. Members are very busy in parliamentary committees right now. How do you view meetings every two weeks?

Will each two-hour period require decisions every week? We should have time to consult at least with the members of our parties. I don't see how one member can make a decision. It isn't a personal decision, but a decision shared by a few members of caucus, at least.

What do you think of this schedule whereby we meet every two weeks once the committee has started its work? How much work will be required between the two meetings to come up with recommendations or advice from our caucus members?

• (1205)

Mr. Michel Patrice: I think that it will vary. Obviously, we'll adapt to the consultation needs of the members of this working group.

I'll be honest. I think that some decisions will be simple. For example, I'm thinking of the Hall of Honour. I don't believe that anyone is expecting any changes to the Hall of Honour. On the other hand, other decisions will require a longer discussion or more extensive sharing of information.

I'm suggesting two hours a week to give you an idea of the level of effort required. I may be completely wrong, but it could take six hours of meetings—or three weeks, or a month—before a decision is made. There's no structured goal whereby, every two hours, three decisions must be made. It will depend on the topics discussed and the committee members' need for reflection and consultations.

In addition, it will depend on the amount of information needed. For example, if a cost projection is required to make a decision, I hope or dare hope that the members wouldn't make a decision without knowing the cost. If it takes a month to obtain the costs, it will take another month to make the decisions. In short, it will take as long as is necessary to make a decision. It's certainly not my goal to hold a gun to your head and say that you must make a decision now without considering the costs.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: That's fine.

I imagine that you have an idea of the sequence of events, from the first decision to the last, and ideally the costs involved. You must have a sense of how long it could take to make all the major decisions that guide the start of the work.

Is this specified in the document, or did I miss it?

Mr. Michel Patrice: It isn't really specified. However, in terms of the House, the halls are very important because they constitute your working environment. The visitors centre is important to us. We must move forward as quickly as possible with these areas.

That said, once again, we don't intend to rush you in your decision making. However, for the sake of responsiveness and to avoid delaying the project, at some point, we may work with parallel designs.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: We could call them scenarios.

Mr. Michel Patrice: Yes, thank you. They would be concepts, parallel scenarios A or B. We would have already done some work on them once the decision is made.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: This will be my last comment, but I want to talk about something that concerns me. The issue is the space reserved for members who are young parents. The Bloc Québécois currently has about a dozen young members with young children. If we want to draw more young people or women towards politics, I think that we must also provide a space that makes it possible to balance the roles of parent and member.

The renovation of the West Block incorporated a family room, which I don't think is being used to its full potential. The idea is good, but perhaps that room doesn't necessarily meet all the needs identified by the members of my party. I'm thinking of the room's location, size and design.

I don't know whether this issue is part of your plans, but I want each party to have a space that I'll call a "family room," where parliamentarians could meet with their spouses while waiting to make a speech, and cradle a child and work at the same time. I think that

we must keep up with the times. We made the effort to create a family room here. However, if we want to look to the future, I think that we must be mindful of this issue. The needs will be even greater in this area.

It may not be too late for you to bear this in mind, Ms. Kulba.

● (1210)

Mr. Michel Patrice: Thank you. That's also one of our main concerns.

[English]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you very much.

I appreciate the comments by my colleagues—none of whom have senators in their caucus—about how we should just simply tell the Senate how it's going to be.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Strahl: I think that will be challenging, quite frankly.

On that note, who is in charge? Who has the final say on the common elements? For instance, though it is a shared building, we wouldn't have a situation in which we on the House side would say that whatever we need to do, we want six floors. I heard rumours about having to use one of the floors for services, as was indicated previously, and how difficult it would be to run the appropriate wiring and all the rest of it. We couldn't have a situation in which, at the Peace Tower, it went from six to five, or six to seven. Who is in charge of the common elements? I guess that would be the exterior. I don't assume that the interior fixtures will change in the Hall of Honour. Maybe I'm wrong there.

If we know there are common elements, who is making those decisions? I know that senators are very particular about what they want to see. For instance, we've heard that they would like 10 committee rooms on the Senate side. I just pull that out as an example.

I have two questions.

Who ensures the common elements? Will that be coming back to us, or is it going to be that we recommend and they look at it? Is that a whole circular discussion?

Then, is there a challenge function at either the department or somewhere else where, if it is deemed that one of the two occupants of the building is making requests that are simply outside of what is reality, Public Services and Procurement Canada would have a challenge function to say, "You might want that, but it's not going to happen", or is it always deferring to parliamentarians to have to make those decisions?

Mr. Duncan Retson (Regional Director General, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)): Thank you. It's an excellent question. It's really important question, and pretty central, in fact.

The truth of the matter is that with a shared building and a shared facility, as we say here, there actually is a shared accountability on this one. As was set out through the presentation, our department and our minister act as custodian. Our department is responsible for doing basically the project management and project delivery. We've adopted an interesting model for Centre Block especially, given the shared accountability.

As to the shared part, parliamentarians ultimately set what their needs are—and that's parliamentarians from both Houses, supported by the respective administrations and, as was mentioned earlier in the presentation as well, the key supporting functions. Those would be the Library of Parliament and the Parliamentary Protective Service, with each of their responsibilities. Those requirements are set by those entities, and we work together.

What is interesting and a bit novel for us is that Jennifer is leading not just a PSPC team, but an integrated project office that consists of representatives from the firms we've hired to conduct the work, and members of the House administration and members of the Senate administration. Different people are coming together, and we're working together on this to try to collectively work out the requirements. In effect, there's what I'm going to call an on-the-ground challenge function that happens in real time as we move through this together, with the respective administrations all working together as a part of this integrated project office to try to pull common decisions together, because it is a common space, to your exact point.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I believe Mr. Julian has another question.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I'm not done.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Oh, I'm sorry. Mr. Strahl, please continue.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Patrice was going to speak, too.

Mr. Michel Patrice: I just want to add something in terms of how the government or system works. At the end of the day, the government is responsible; it is holding the purse. They have has the financial initiative. For example, if the government feels they don't want to spend that kind of money the requirements that have been sought, they cannot present those budgets that would support those requirements. At the same time, as you know, it's Parliament that approves. That's the higher principle with regard to what I would suggest are excessive requirements, either by the House, for example, or....

• (1215)

Mr. Mark Strahl: I'm not sure if it's appropriate to ask, Mr. Chair, if you have met with the minister. Have you talked to the minister about this project, the long-term vision and plan? Perhaps at a future meeting it would be productive, while we're discussing this, to have.... As Mr. Patrice has said, this is a government decision. There's a minister responsible for this file. It might be something we discuss. I don't want to put someone on the spot here, but we work through all of these officials, who are doing great work, but the minister is accountable for her department as well. Perhaps she would come here either to give her perspective on this project, as one of her files, or to hear from us once we have developed this working group or the plan from this side, so that we are all on the same page as members of Parliament and the minister.

I think it would be productive. I just throw that out there, as Mr. Holland has, about the timing of a meeting. I think it would be good for us to hear from the minister and to include her and her office as much as possible in this process so that we're not running at cross purposes.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I have not met with the minister. I have met with Monsieur Patrice and his team for maybe a little bit more in-depth update, a briefing, on what's gone on so far in here. I'm sure that's something we can consider as a board and go from there.

Thank you.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much. This is an important and interesting discussion.

Coming back to Mr. Holland's original comments about being concerned about a joint Senate process, I think it's fair to say that we would all agree that there needs to be consultation with the Senate, but ultimately, the issues around some of the proposals, including the additional Senate meeting rooms, is something that I think we do need to examine as we go through this process and set principles that Ms. Bergen suggested earlier.

Ultimately, if we come up with recommendations, it's up to the government to make that decision and make that call. If the Senate comes up with different recommendations, again it's up to the government to make that call. Hearing from you—and thank you very much for your feedback—consolidated in my mind the idea that we move forward not with a joint process, but in consultation with the Senate and putting forward what we think is best for preserving the Centre Block, ensuring that we can function in a modernized Centre Block but without going into additional luxuries, I would say, that taxpayers are not willing to pay for and that really aren't needed.

If we govern with those principles that way and move forward, consulting with the Senate but not necessarily integrating all of the requests, we may end up with two slightly different proposals. Ultimately, it would be up to the government to make that decision.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any comments on that? Are there any other questions?

There was a lot of discussion. It was very good. The one point we are taking, and that we'll have to act on, is that upon return from the constituency week we'll make sure that we have a meeting scheduled and make sure it takes place. Then we can take decisive action from there. In the meantime, I'd like all the members to really seriously think about how they see this committee forming and who will be on it. We'll discuss it then.

[*Translation*]

We'll now continue—

Yes, Ms. DeBellefeuille?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: While Mr. Patrice is leaving us, I want to take the opportunity to say that I greatly appreciate the fact that he speaks very slowly. That way, when he speaks in English, the interpreters can provide a good interpretation. I'm pointing this out because we notice this type of thing when public servants appear before the committee.

Ms. Kulba and Ms. Garrett, I imagine that English is your mother tongue. You speak very quickly, which makes the interpreter's job more difficult. The interpreter is excellent, by the way. I want to congratulate her. Thanks to her, I didn't lose track of the conversation.

In short, Mr. Patrice, you speak remarkably well. This makes me feel that I'm part of the group, and it helps me understand all the nuances.

I want to thank the interpreters.

• (1220)

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you. That's a nice comment.

We'll now move on to the third quarterly financial report for 2019-20. The speakers will be Daniel Paquette, chief financial officer, and Elaine Valiquette, senior director of financial planning, resource management and corporate policies.

Mr. Daniel Paquette (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm here to present the third quarterly financial report for 2019-20.

The first slide shows the various reports prepared by the administration that contain financial data. These reports are all presented here to the Board of Internal Economy members over the course of a year. All these reports help support effective oversight of the use of public funds.

[English]

The third quarterly report compares the current year-to-date financial information up to the end of the third quarter with the financial information of the same period from the previous fiscal year. It is prepared using the expenditure basis of accounting, which is consistent with the Public Accounts of Canada. The approved authorities include the House's main and supplementary estimates, which have been approved here by the board.

[Translation]

As of December 31, the approved authorities for 2019-20 total \$520.7 million. This represents a decrease of \$2.2 million or 0.4% compared with the previous year.

The most significant changes concern a \$9.3 million decrease in the members' pension plans. This decrease is offset by increases of \$3.4 million and \$1.5 million related to the rise in the cost of living for members, House officers and the administration. There's also a \$1.4 million increase for substantive reports and a \$0.6 million increase for major investments.

[English]

At the end of the third quarter of 2019-20, the expenditures totalled \$350.4 million, compared with \$348.1 million for the same

period in the last fiscal year. This represents an increase of \$2.3 million, or 0.7%.

The expenditures are also presented by type of cost. The most significant increase for our third quarter, compared with the same period in the previous year, is for computers, office furniture and fixtures. This has increased by \$4.7 million due to the investments associated with the long-term vision and plan, as well as investments relating to the management of computers in constituencies and our IT infrastructure.

[Translation]

In addition, the 2019-20 salary and benefit expenditures increased in the third quarter. These increases are mainly related to the hiring of additional employees and the support for various initiatives, such as information technology managed on behalf of the constituencies, the team providing advisory services to members as employers, and the various preparations for activities related to the general election.

In addition, the increase in repairs and maintenance expenditures is mainly related to costs associated with the long-term vision and plan and the maintenance of our computer infrastructure. There was also a decrease in transportation and telecommunications expenditures for this period, compared with the previous year. This was primarily related to a decline in travel in the year of a general election.

• (1225)

[English]

Finally, the report provides a comparison between 2019-20 and 2018-19 in the utilization of our authorities. As of December 31, it shows a slight increase of 0.7%.

It is important to mention that the House promotes efficient use of resources and consistently strives to minimize the request for incremental funding whenever possible. Following this year's general election, we are closely monitoring the various considerations of the financial impact of what has been happening and making funding decisions throughout the year accordingly.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my presentation.

[Translation]

I can now answer the members' questions.

[English]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Aren't you guys cold? Are we trying to save heat here?

[Translation]

I have two questions.

You just mentioned a decrease in the cost of the members' pension plans. Is this the result of a change in the contribution?

Mr. Daniel Paquette: The level of the employer's contribution to the members' pension plan is based on an actuarial valuation that we receive from the central agencies. It's a decrease between the two years of this contribution.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay.

What's included in the \$2.7 million increase in employee-related expenditures in the third quarter?

Mr. Daniel Paquette: Basically, it's the increases in the cost of living. There's also an increase in resources for some of our projects.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Is it because there are many people?

Mr. Daniel Paquette: I don't have the exact figures, but a number of people were involved in the various transition programs. A few employees helped out in the constituency offices with the various computers. We needed to increase our resources in this area.

Most of the increase is related to the new team supporting members as employers when it comes to human resources.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: They're permanent employees.

Mr. Daniel Paquette: Exactly.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay. Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Ms. Bergen, followed by Mr. Julian.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Under which budget item does the bus-ing service for the precinct come under? The reason I ask is that I've been hearing from a lot of members that there's been a change and a cutback in the buses. I don't imagine this is really reflected that much in the numbers, but I've been hearing about it, so I thought this probably was a good opportunity to bring the issue forward.

Mr. Daniel Paquette: It'll be under transportation. I don't have that level of detail here with me to know what proportion it reflects. We can make sure to come back to the members with an explanation of what the change in the policy has been.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Okay, we can maybe talk about that.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

Mr. Julian.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Paquette, thank you for your presentation.

Compared to last year, computers, office equipment, furniture and fixtures have almost doubled.

Mr. Daniel Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Peter Julian: I want to know whether there's anything pending. I know that we're in the process of upgrading the computers. Will there be an increase next year as well?

My other question concerns a snap election. I don't want this to happen, but we never know. If it were to happen in the next few months, what would be the financial impact?

Mr. Daniel Paquette: First, I'll talk about the renewal of the computer platform. During an election period, meaning when elections take place every four years, we have the opportunity to carry out spontaneous renewals. The goal is to keep our equipment up to date and running throughout the parliamentary precinct. During a scheduled general election, the costs associated with the renewals are higher.

Are we expecting this increase next year? No, we aren't. There will be only the regular programs planned for the rest of our computers.

In the case of a snap election, various items decrease, such as travel costs, and other items increase. We carry out the necessary monitoring to ensure that we balance the budget so that we don't need to come back here to offset the budgets. We'll keep a very close eye on this, in case it happens in future years.

• (1230)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Paquette.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any other questions?

[*English*]

Do we have an answer for Ms. Bergen's question? Is that something we want to broach right now?

Mr. Daniel Paquette: I don't have that information.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I just saw someone come in. I'm just wondering if that's something that.... If it's okay, we can come back to it later.

There's no time like the present.

Mr. Charles Robert: The service reduction in buses seems to have been noticed by some of the members. There's a question about whether that has that actually happened and why. If it did.

Mr. Benoit Giroux (Chief Operations Officer, Parliamentary Precinct Operations, House of Commons): Do you mean, specifically, since the opening of the West Block?

Hon. Candice Bergen: I would say even from December until now. Either way, has there been a reduction in services since the opening of West Block?

Mr. Benoit Giroux: The only reduction in service that we made was this summer. At the adjournment of the House, we stopped the buses because there was construction at the Elgin gate. We reduced service for the summer and reinstated it after the election when the House came back in December.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Is there only one bus with a green sticker coming straight up to the West Block?

Mr. Benoit Giroux: We've made some adjustments, correct. We've made some adjustments to the parliamentary circuit and the Wellington Street circuit. We're making adjustments with the current fleet of buses that we have. We're currently looking into it to make sure that the adjustments are the best. We'll continue to make the required adjustments.

You're saying that the buses with the green route—the parliamentary one—has been deficient?

Hon. Candice Bergen: I'm asking if there been a reduction in the number of buses that come straight up here to West Block with the green—

Mr. Benoit Giroux: We had a period when we put more buses on Wellington Street and we adjusted the Parliament Hill route. The reason for that is when we started the West Block back in January last year, we had more buses on Parliament Hill. With the reduction of the length of the route further to the closure of Centre Block, we felt that the buses were following each other. To better adjust, we put an additional bus on Wellington Street and we've reduced the Parliament one, yes.

Hon. Candice Bergen: So there isn't an overall reduction, but there has been a reduction to.... There's been a change, and I would say that change—

Mr. Benoit Giroux: We've made some adjustments, yes.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Yes, and we probably need to have some discussion about that, because members who are either coming to Centre Block for votes or for House duty or for various reasons have to do the whole tour, and when traffic is busy on Wellington, you have three or four buses going all around Wellington and only one that's coming straight up to West Block. That has been a reduction however you described it.

We probably need to have some discussion on how that's affecting MPs.

Mr. Benoit Giroux: Yes, and we will certainly look into that.

Thank you.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Thank you very much.

Hon. Anthony Rota: That's very good.

Are there any more questions on item 5?

We'll proceed to item 6, "Alignment of Carry-Forward Policies". The presenters will be Daniel Paquette, chief financial officer, and José Fernandez, deputy chief financial officer.

• (1235)

Mr. Daniel Paquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

I'm here to present a submission requesting the Board of Internal Economy's permission to improve the carry-forward policies for members, presiding officers and House officers.

A carry-forward concerns unused money that can be carried over from one fiscal year to the next. The option of carrying forward encourages careful budget management since it allows for some flexibility by facilitating better planning of the use of resources.

According to the current policy, the method for calculating carry-forwards may create a disparity in the fiscal year following an election. The administration proposes to align the carry-forward calculation methods for all members and presiding officers to ensure a smoother transition in the fiscal year following a general election. In addition, we want to optimize the carry-forwards that support the parliamentary functions of House officers.

[*English*]

For members and presiding officers, we are recommending that the current method used to calculate the carry-forward for re-elected members and reappointed presiding officers be applicable to newly elected and newly appointed members in these roles. This would mean that the maximum carry-forward would be calculated as 5% of the annual budget, instead of the pro-rated budget.

For House officers, we are recommending an update to the carry-forward policy to maximize the resources within a caucus in support of their parliamentary functions. House officers would continue to receive the carry-forward based on their individual House officer budgets, but the total of these individual carry-forwards would be compared to the carry-forward amounts based on the combined House officer budget within a caucus. Should there be a difference between those two amounts, the difference would be redistributed to each House officer based on their budget's proportion of the total caucus budget.

[*Translation*]

The recommended changes don't have any additional financial impact on the House in general. The administration will continue to request funding for eligible carry-forwards through supplementary estimates, in keeping with the current practice.

[*English*]

These changes would provide for...

Hon. Anthony Rota: If I could, for a moment, I believe Mr. Holland has a—

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to dispense with the presentation. Not because of its quality, but because I think there is consent to move forward.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Do we have consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Anthony Rota: We'll move forward.

Thank you. That was a very good presentation.

Mr. Peter Julian: Amazingly convincing; we have nothing to say.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Number 7.

[*Translation*]

This item concerns the use of House resources to hold an event in a constituency office.

Mr. Julian, do you have a question?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes. I want to be on the list.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Let's put Mr. Julian on the list.

Before continuing the discussion on item number 7, the use of House resources to hold an event in a constituency office, I want to inform the Board of Internal Economy that a letter was received yesterday afternoon from the member concerned.

[English]

In a letter to the clerk, the member indicated that the event was parliamentary in nature and that no partisan activities were held at or during the event. However, the member takes full responsibility for the error contained in the initial invitation and has enclosed a cheque reimbursing the cost of the event.

Mr. Julian, did you have any comments?

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm glad to hear that. I thought the email was not good, but the member's response was very quick in notifying

the clerk, in withdrawing the email and also in submitting the cheque. Unless other members have comments, I have no further comments.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any other comments? If we have unanimous consent on this one, we'll move on.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

We'll pause for about two minutes and 45 seconds to allow everyone to leave while we go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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