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Board of Internal Economy

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• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): Welcome to meeting number 18 of the Board of Internal Economy of the 43rd Parliament.

We will begin with the first item, the minutes of the previous meeting. Are there any questions about it? Since I see no raised hands, let's continue.

We will now move on to business arising from the previous meeting, the dashboards and virtual committees. Are there any questions on that?

Ms. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

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

I would like to address two items of business arising from the previous meeting.

I would like to talk about the dashboards first. I read them carefully and they are very useful in my work as a whip. If I may, I would like to ask a few questions about the dashboard.

On page 3 of the report, it says that the preliminary tests are 96% done. Does this mean that 96% of witnesses have undergone a preliminary test? Is that what that means, Mr. Janse?

Mr. Eric Janse (Clerk Assistant, Committees and Legislative Services Directorate, House of Commons): That is exactly right, Ms. DeBellefeuille.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: All right.

Does what is written on page 4 mean that half of the witnesses did not have headsets that complied with our standards?

Mr. Eric Janse: Either they didn't have a headset sent by the House or they were using a headset that was not approved by the House. Obviously, there are improvements to be made in this area. The difficulty is always having the time to send headsets to witnesses.

Lastly, we have put in place a process in collaboration with Mr. Aubé's team, which has approved a list of good headsets. When we don't have time to send a headset to witnesses, we encourage them to buy one themselves and then we reimburse them. We hope this will help us to have a better success rate on future dashboards.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Good.

The last question I have on this part is about page 6.

When witnesses come to committee and they don't have headsets or they don't have the equipment, what happens?

Are witnesses automatically invited to reappear? Has there been testimony without headsets, and therefore without interpretation?

Mr. Eric Janse: If there are any problems during the pre-test or on the day of the meeting itself, or if the witness simply does not have a headset, the clerk will notify the committee chair following discussions with the technical team. The chair can provide this information to the committee, and it is up to the committee to decide what to do.

The committee can decide to hear the witness anyway, or, as you suggested, they can ask that witness to come back to another hearing when they are better equipped. This is really at the discretion of the committee, which decides how it will proceed.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Fine.

Yesterday, at the Standing Liaison Committee, someone said that most committees have adopted housekeeping motions that ask the committee chair to tell members at the beginning of the meeting whether the tests have been done and whether the witnesses have the necessary equipment. This makes things easier.

It was noted that few chairs made this statement at the beginning of the meeting. Knowing in advance that witnesses do not have helmets or that they have technical difficulties can be helpful. It allows the committee to make a decision at the outset rather than finding that the witness does not have everything they need during their testimony. Members may be too uncomfortable to interrupt.

So committee chairs have been asked to indicate this at the beginning of the sitting. I encourage the whips to remind all committee members that it is important to know this at the beginning of the meeting so that good decisions can be made. This prevents witnesses from appearing without the right equipment, which has implications for our interpreters.

The other point I wanted to make is to you, Mr. Chair.

It concerns your ruling in the House on Monday, June 7, regarding the misconduct of the member for Pontiac and your willingness to ask the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to look into this matter. I had discussions with my colleagues prior to the Board of Internal Economy meeting. I had invited you to review the decision to put the April 14 incident on the agenda, and I note that this item is absent. So I wanted to thank you for listening to all the members of the committee.

• (1115)

Hon. Anthony Rota: You're welcome.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to Mr. Richards.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell will be next.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Chief Opposition Whip): Thank you.

I had two items of my own, but I'm not sure if I misunderstood what Ms. DeBellefeuille said. Was she suggesting that we put something up for discussion?

Hon. Anthony Rota: No, the item relating to the April 14 has been removed from the agenda.

Mr. Blake Richards: She's just confirming that she's agreed to that.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Exactly. She's just thanking us for listening to her point.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay. Thank you, I appreciate that.

I have two things to raise.

The first one is that we have been provided some information with regard to technical incidents, etc., at committees. That brings to mind for me that there has been some discussion around here about fairly significant technical upgrades that are required this summer that would make resources unavailable for a couple of different and fairly lengthy periods of time.

I wondered if we could get a bit more information on what those upgrades entail. Specifically, we've been operating in a hybrid manner and we've seen some challenges with the availability of resources as a result. Particularly in the last couple of days, we've seen the other three whips agreeing to cancel meetings to ensure that certain other committee meetings occur. Of course, that's not something I've agreed to, but it has happened, and obviously it's unfortunate to say the least when we are in situations where committees are not able to do the work they're supposed to do.

I would assume that with vaccination rates rising and whatnot, we'll probably be seeing an end to hybrid sittings of committees within a fairly short period of time, but I am curious about the technical upgrades being done this summer. Are some of them related to hybrid sittings? Are technical upgrades needed for other reasons? Maybe you could just elaborate a bit on what those upgrades are and why they're required. I'm not certain I have enough information.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Okay, we'll pass that on to Monsieur Aubé.

Mr. Blake Richards: I do have one other thing that—

Hon. Anthony Rota: Sorry.

Mr. Blake Richards: It's fine, we can—

Hon. Anthony Rota: Is it related to this one?

Mr. Blake Richards: No, they're separate. I just want you to know that I still want the floor.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Okay, we'll come back to you again.

Monsieur Aubé.

Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Richards, thank you for the question.

We're planning two windows of maintenance for the summer.

The plan is for the first period to deal with updates to the chamber systems and committee rooms. We haven't had a chance since the end of January to do the necessary maintenance for security reasons, because all the systems we're using are actually connected to the Internet.... There's some patching to be done. We tried to do it, sir, during the March and April time frame and then we ran into a lot of issues because we didn't have the appropriate time frames to do the testing required before releasing these into production. So we have moved all of our scheduled windows to two windows this summer.

The first one is right after the adjournment of the session, hopefully after June 23 to the end of June and the beginning of July, and then the last window, sir, is for what we are calling a “multimedia operation centre” where we distribute all content to Canada. All of the maintenance for that system hasn't been done in over eight months, and it's required so that we can properly support the chamber, distribute the content to Canada, and also ensure that we have a secure environment for the operations to work.

It's not about our people, sir. It's really about making sure that the systems are up and functioning and that we can do the necessary testing so that we can minimize the number of incidents we have in the chamber or committee rooms. Those are our plans.

Usually we do this on a year-to-year basis. We've been doing it since I've been at the House, for more than 20 years. We've always used these windows because we've had the opportunity in the summer, but this year has been a little bit different because we haven't had a lot of the windows we usually do. That's why we're focusing on this at this time.

Having said that, sir, if ever there's a need for the House to come back, if there's ever a need for another priority, as we did at Christmas, we have plans in place to make sure that Parliament can sit. If ever it is the decision of Parliament to bring back the House, we will certainly make sure that you can do your work as usual.

That's my commitment to the House, Mr. Speaker.

• (1120)

Hon. Anthony Rota: We'll go back to Mr. Richards, and then over to Mr. Julian.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you, I just have one very short follow-up. I appreciate the information, which is very informative and helpful.

You mentioned that if there were a need for the House to sit, you would make sure it could happen. That's obviously incredibly important.

Would the same apply if there were emergency committee meetings? Would you be able to find a way to make sure they can operate as well?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: It would be our goal to do so.

Our preference is to keep that window open if we can. If the House decides that we need to have this to happen, sir, we've always found ways to make it happen. We're going to try to do our best to make this happen, sir.

Mr. Blake Richards: Sure. I appreciate.

I know you always have done everything you can, so I appreciate that. Thank you for the information.

I have another matter I want to raise quickly.

We have lost or will soon be losing three of the most senior procedural clerks in the House: Colette Labrecque-Riel, Beverley Isles, and as I understand now, André Gagnon. We're going to see his retirement soon. These are three of the most senior people we have. I think there's close to 100 years of combined experience there. One of them, literally, wrote the book on procedure.

First of all, we want to acknowledge and thank them for all of the work and the contributions they have made to this place. However, I suppose it also raises a question on which I want to see if we can get some information brought back to the board. I understand that each of them has at different times been on medical leave in the last few years and then have ultimately decided to retire early. They all strike me as pretty young despite their lengthy years of service, so it seems as though those retirements could be coming a little early. Losing even one of them is a huge loss to this House, but quite frankly, losing three of them is probably an immeasurable loss.

Can we get a report back on whether there has been any work done on determining whether there are any internal factors that have caused such a significant and unexpected turnover? Is there anything being done both to try to mitigate their loss and as to whether there's anything we need to correct to ensure that we're not finding something occurring that's causing three of our more senior people to choose to leave in what I would say seem to be early retirements?

Can we ask that the administration examine that and come back with something on that? If there's any comment now, I'd be happy to hear if anything has been done.

Hon. Anthony Rota: It's a fair request. We'll ask the administration to come up with a report and find out if there's anything—

Mr. Blake Richards: That's unless there's anything to report now. If not—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Ms. Laframboise, did you want to add something?

[*English*]

Would you have something to report on that, or should we come back with a report?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michelle Laframboise (Chief Human Resources Officer, House of Commons): Certainly, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

[*English*]

The only comment I would make at this time is, in my experience, people retire when they can and when they want to. If you have any questions specific to Mr. Gagnon's retirement plans, I would suggest that you ask him what his plans are, but he is eligible for and has opted to retire.

Mr. Blake Richards: Given that, I think it would be good if we could ask that there be... Any time you lose three senior people, especially when they seem to retire earlier than what would be expected, it's probably wise to examine whether there's anything internal that is at play there. Maybe we need to examine those things and determine whether there's anything we can do to ensure that we don't lose other folks to early retirement like we have these three.

It could well be that, in this case, it's just coincidence that three of our most senior people have all made that decision, but it's always important. I know if I were to lose three senior people from an organization, I would want to examine whether there's anything we need to do to ensure that we don't have further occurrences.

Hon. Anthony Rota: That's a fair request. We'll put that forward and see about getting a report back.

I do concur with you. They are very useful and they will be missed when they leave.

Mr. Julian.

• (1125)

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

I would reiterate Mr. Richards' request. I am concerned with high turnover. When we lose three people, who've given so much to the House, in rapid order in what seems to be their stepping down early, it's a matter of concern.

I thank you, Mr. Chair, for responding to Mr. Richards' request. I also believe that at the next BOIE meeting, perhaps in camera, we should have a discussion to determine if this is something we should be concerned about.

I want to come back to Mr. Aubé, because we have two dynamics at work. One is the new variants. I don't think we can, at this point, anticipate that in September, if there is no election, the House would reconvene as if the pandemic didn't exist. We're all hopeful that, eventually, the pandemic will die down, but the variants have meant that there's been a third wave, and there's anticipation now of a fourth wave this summer. We have to plan for that, of course.

There are discussions taking place in other forums about how that will look over the course of the summer.

Perhaps I missed this, Mr. Aubé, but I'd really like to get the dates at this point when committees can meet. Committees will be meeting over the summer—there's no doubt about that. There will be issues that will come up that require committee participation. I gather there are provisions if the House is recalled, and that's good. Committees will meet.

You mentioned June 23, and it wasn't clear to me what the end date was in that first preference for the administration that committees not schedule meetings. You then talked about further dates, but I didn't grab the dates that were mentioned.

What are the very concrete blackout periods that we can pass on to our caucuses of the administration's preferences of when not to hold emergency committee meetings during the course of the summer?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: We're currently looking at two windows. I want to be specific with exact dates. We are looking for a break for committees from June 30 to July 18. The other window is from August 21 to September 13. These were the two windows we requested the House leaders to consider.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for that.

I think Mr. Richards asked this question, as well.

In the case of a committee that absolutely needs to meet during that period—we live in times where emergencies arise—is there a provision for a committee to meet even during these periods?

Mr. Stéphan Aubé: As I committed to Mr. Richards, and to the Speaker, in the case of an emergency, we would certainly make the appropriate arrangements for a committee to sit, if required.

We're asking... If all committees were to sit at the pace they're sitting right now, we wouldn't be able to provide maintenance during that time.

That's the comment I'm making here.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Are there any other comments regarding item number 2?

In that case, we will proceed to item number 3, improvements to the Printing and Mailing Services program.

[*English*]

We'll now proceed to Ms. Kletke.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rebekah Kletke (Chief Operations Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am here today with Ms. Julie Allard, director of client service delivery, to provide an update on enhancements we are implementing in printing and mailing services.

Over the past year, we have continually evolved the printing and mailing service offering in line with members' needs. On January 28, 2021, we presented to members of the board preliminary areas of enhancement that we would further explore, and today we will share what we have implemented or will be implementing following this analysis.

• (1130)

[*English*]

During our review, we considered the lessons learned from the adjustments made over the past year. We remain focused on the changes we could make in order to meet the evolving communication needs of members based on your feedback. After careful assessment, we determined that reducing production time frames from 12 days to nine days and increasing surge capacity during peak periods were the enhancements that presented the greatest potential impact while maintaining current resource and budget levels.

We will reduce our production time frames by implementing several changes. Since the pandemic and moving forward, householder proofs are being produced digitally. This allows us to save, on average, one full day in our production process and \$10,000 per year. By fall 2021, we will finish reallocating resources within PAMS to improve our front-end client service response times, verification, proofing and planning capacity.

Over the summer, we will be creating a series of instructional videos to help members' employees prepare and submit printing requests, beginning with holiday greeting cards in the fall. Examples of topics the videos will cover include members' printing allocations and the differences between householders and constituency mail.

By fall 2021, we will adjust planning mechanisms to move away from a first-come, first-served basis in favour of a more personalized approach. This means that we will take into account the location of the constituency—for example, whether it's remote and rural—and Canada Post delivery time frames to prioritize requests.

Also by fall 2021, we will allow for more flexible submission deadlines during peak periods, while achieving the same production time frames and managing costs.

Finally, following this meeting, we will modify two labour-intensive formats so they are better aligned with our production environment while still meeting client needs. These modifications are shown in the appendix included in your package. As part of our implementation strategy, members currently using these formats will be contacted individually to be informed of our modifications.

By reducing the current average internal production timelines, we will also be helping to ensure the efficient and effective use of in-house equipment and resources, consistent quality at a reasonable cost and equitable service to all members.

The second enhancement involves the establishment of framework agreements, and consultation with Canada Post, with western, central, eastern and northern print shops throughout Canada by fall 2021. This will ensure that consistent, timely and high-quality products are delivered through in-house production or by pre-approved external suppliers during peak periods when internal capacity is exceeded.

External suppliers provide services at market-value cost and they are equipped to provide services and are located near a Canada Post distribution centre capable of receiving materials.

[*Translation*]

The implementation of these enhancements will have no impact on budgets, by-laws or policies. We will continue to monitor average production time frames, including, but not limited to, the number of days for each production stage, client response times, internal and external printing costs, and client feedback to ensure that these enhancements achieve the expected benefits we have shared with you today.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

[*English*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you.

I'll apologize in advance. I do have a number of questions. This has been a significant source of questions from my caucus, so I will apologize to all of my colleagues in advance. I'll try to keep it as brief as I can.

The first question relates to one of the cases that I brought forward, which was partially responsible for the request for this report today. Thank you for the efforts you made to try to find ways to improve some of the services and efficiencies. That is very much appreciated.

The case was about a colleague who ensured that he met all of the guidelines and jumped through the necessary hoops to make sure that he met all of the deadlines to submit a year-end mailing, which did seem to have to be submitted quite early, but he was able to do so. What happened was that the mailing ended up coming far before the end of the year. It was a Christmas-related thing, if I remember correctly, and it arrived way too early to be reasonably seen for Christmas. Obviously, that was a source of issues.

I'm wondering if these changes—I'm pointing to a couple of things you mentioned, like a more personalized approach to delivery times and greater submission flexibility—would apply in this case. I think that's been one of the challenges. What we're talking about there is finding ways for members to ask that it be delivered as soon as it's ready, or they can ask for it to be delivered on a certain date, etc.

Is that what you're driving at with personalized approaches and greater submission flexibility or is there more to that?

• (1135)

Ms. Rebekah Kletke: That's exactly what we're driving at, Mr. Richards, and thank you for your question.

The greater flexibility around submission time frames will be facilitated through that more personalized approach that we'll also be implementing concurrently. We're also hoping to improve our communications on those as well and to make them more responsive.

I think those three items together will work and get at that specific case that you've raised.

Thank you.

Mr. Blake Richards: Perfect. That's great.

I've been there before, too, where, based on the average window, if I submit it here, it's probably going to arrive around there, and then sometimes it will come a little earlier and sometimes a little later.

In a case like that, a member could now say, for example, that they want this to arrive on November 15. You would tell them that it might not be possible given timelines, or that it was going to be early, that it would be November 15 exactly, or that it would be November 15 or later if you couldn't meet it.

Is that the flexibility we're talking about here? Members could say this is when they'd like it to arrive, and then you would have a conversation about whether or not it could be done?

Ms. Rebekah Kletke: That is exactly the flexibility.

Julie, do you want to add any further details?

Ms. Julie Allard (Director, Client Service Delivery, House of Commons): Yes, thank you.

Although we don't have any control on the Canada Post side, we'll definitely make that flexibility available.

Mr. Blake Richards: Perfect. Great. I'm glad to hear it.

I have a couple of other things. I'm going to raise the issue of the elimination of paper proofs. I've heard it from others, but it's been an issue for me personally. I have had times when I've designed something based on the folds and what people will see when they open the first fold, etc. That's a fairly important part of the mailing.

I've had times when the way we've agreed to fold it, even with a paper proof, has not ended up being the way it has been sent, which has caused an issue. I'm concerned, actually, that not having a paper proof could exacerbate that problem. I understand the idea behind it—that it improves efficiency—but I would strongly argue that you should at least leave that option available to people. I know that I still want to see a paper proof to ensure that my fold is correct. I'm not sure how else to really ensure that, so I think you should at least leave the option for members to ask for that. It doesn't have to be an absolute requirement that's sent every time, but if a member wishes to have a paper proof, I think it should still be provided.

Is that something you'd be open to?

Ms. Julie Allard: Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Richards. Absolutely the option will always be there. The default will be no paper proof, but you can also ask for a paper proof. That option will still be available.

Mr. Blake Richards: That will be communicated to members so they're aware of that as well?

Okay. That's great. Thank you.

I have one last thing. In regard to the peak periods, when you get overburdened, you're talking about engaging with regional print shops to have some external....

What would be the process to determine which regional print shops those would be? Is that going to be a competitive bidding process? How will you determine when you need to engage the regional print shops?

Ms. Rebekah Kletke: To your point, Mr. Richards, it would be a competitive process in partnership with our colleagues in finance who are responsible for our procurement process at the House, but we are also leveraging partnerships with other federal departments, such as Elections Canada or Stats Canada, and comparing lessons learned and who they might be using. It will be done through a competitive process, and it will be when our internal capacity is exceeded to keep the production time frames to the nine days that we are dropping it down to.

We would be using those external providers when our internal production capacity is exceeded.

• (1140)

Mr. Blake Richards: So on an ongoing basis you will monitor this, and whenever you see that you're exceeding the nine-day service standard, you will then engage regional print until you can catch up to that standard.

Ms. Rebekah Kletke: That's correct.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay. That's great. Thank you. I really appreciate your report and your answers.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: We will continue with Ms. DeBellefeuille.

Ms. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your presentation, Ms. Kletke.

The Bloc Québécois caucus really has no problem at all with Printing and Mailing Services. Although not everything is in place, we are rather impressed by the fact that, already, production times often better the standards. We are therefore very satisfied with the Printing and Mailing Services. We are very happy with the change in format that you are proposing for constituency mail. We think it is a much more user-friendly model.

Our only minor concerns relate to Canada Post services in the Upper North Shore area. The interface between the printing service, the post office and the delivery of mail to fellow citizens can mean five to seven weeks for mail delivery. We were wondering who we

could talk to about this problem. Mail delivery is about the only problem we have, for example, in one area of the Manicouagan riding, where the post offices are further away.

As for the rest, sincerely, I think you are proactive. I like your professional service. Your whole team really cares about producing high quality publications. Unlike my colleague, we like to receive digital proofs that we have to approve. For us, it speeds up the processing and printing, and satisfies us.

I wanted to congratulate you on finding ways to get our publications out as quickly as possible, as always.

I do have one small suggestion for you, though. You said you would make short videos to educate MPs or their staff about the new operation. I would add a video that could demonstrate the difference between a constituency letter and a group letter. MPs have a hard time grasping the difference, the rules around these two publications and their different time frames, among other things.

We know that between a group mailing and a constituency mailing there can be less than 30 days, but this notion has not yet been absorbed. So you could take the opportunity to add that to your videos. For our part, as whips, we would direct our MPs and their staff to this short learning video so that they are familiar with the distinction between these two important parliamentary tools that are framed by different rules.

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

[*English*]

We've just had a request.

There's a vote on right now. Some of you are whips and will want to make sure that you have your finger on the pulse of what's going on.

We're going to suspend until after the vote. I encourage everyone to come back as soon as possible once the vote is done.

[*Translation*]

We want to continue our session with Mr. Stanton, Mr. Wright and Ms. Garrett, who are here to make a presentation. We don't want to bring them back again, because this is the second time their presentation has been postponed.

Have a good vote. We will resume in about 30 minutes.

Thank you.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: We'll get started.

I know we've all been waiting with bated breath for these LTVP working group recommendations. We keep bringing them back, and that's why....

I'll just pass it over to Mr. Stanton.

An hon. member: The third time's the charm.

Hon. Anthony Rota: That's right. The third time's the charm.

Mr. Stanton, I'll leave it to you. We're looking forward to your presentation.

[Translation]

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Chair, Working Group on the LTVP and the Centre Block Rehabilitation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As chair of the long-term vision and plan working group, I am here today to update the board on our work from the last working group meetings and our recent meeting with the Senate LTVP subcommittee, and to seek endorsement of our recommendations regarding the proposed approach for the tarping of Centre Block, the construction site hoarding interpretive panels, and the PSPC public engagement strategy.

[English]

PSPC presented us with various options for the tarping of Centre Block. While Centre Block undergoes its rehabilitation, the construction work will be happening from basement to roof, inside and out, and access to all areas will be required for the work. General access will be provided by installing scaffolding all around the building, and, along with the access it provides, this will also assist in the restoration of the masonry on the building facades.

As part of the masonry work, there needs to be protection from the elements and cold weather. The tarps on the scaffolding provide that protection, as well as enclosing the scaffolding for various other reasons. This is typical on most construction sites, as you have seen most recently on West Block, and can presently see on East Block, where it is enclosed with white tarps for the duration of the rehabilitation.

The white tarping tends to be quite obvious and somewhat unattractive, especially in such an iconic location as Parliament Hill. What has become more common around the world, to enhance the visitor experience and general image of iconic heritage buildings while undergoing construction, is to print images of the hidden building on the tarp—essentially a *trompe l'oeil*, an optical illusion of sorts. It provides the continuity of experiencing the sense of place with a replica of the building facade.

The working group was presented with three approaches to Centre Block in this respect. First was to colour the tarps on all four facades to match the colour of existing stone, if you will—a sand colour. You can see it in the upper right-hand corner of the slide. A second option was a front facade *trompe l'oeil* over the south facade facing Wellington Street and all of the other three walls in the stone sand colour. Finally, a third option was a *trompe l'oeil* on all four facades.

The working group deliberated on the merits of all three options. We also received letters from mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau and the National Capital Commission strongly encouraging Parliament to support a *trompe l'oeil* on all four facades in order to maintain a positive visitor experience.

We believe that a responsible approach is to recommend that all facades receive the *trompe l'oeil* images of Centre Block.

The tarps will be used for the full duration of the project and are estimated by PSPC to cost in the neighbourhood of \$3.8 million. This will preserve the iconic image of Centre Block for all who visit, both for Ottawa and Gatineau, and enhance the tourist experience of Parliament over the course of its rehabilitation.

• (1230)

[Translation]

In June 2019, parliamentarians endorsed the approach to construct hoarding on the Hill for the renovation of the Parliament Building. The proposal comprised panels with large monochromatic photos interspersed with interpretive panels and wayfinding to be installed across the parliamentary lawn. Once the interpretive content was developed, it was expected that PSPC would return to seek final approval on the panels.

The working group was presented with fully developed detailed information for the bilingual interpretive panels, as well as images. The panels will convey information under the following themes: Parliamentary theme; centre block rehabilitation theme; Parliament Hill timeline and gathering place theme; indigenous theme; wayfinding theme.

With the exception of the indigenous-themed panels, which still require wider consultation, the WG supports the approval of the other panels, which we believe are appropriate and informative. A full-scale mock-up of the panels is currently on site to allow for review. We recommend that the board endorse the construction hoarding panel proposal so that PSPC can proceed to make and install the interpretive hoarding this summer.

PSPC also presented its approach to public engagement for the Centre Block project and the LTVP. The WG reviewed the detailed information provided and recommends that the board endorse the proposed public survey and plan that PSPC has developed.

[English]

At our meeting of March 12, we were provided with a progress update on the entrance sequence design for the Parliament welcome centre. The members of the independent design review panel attended to advise and answer questions. The working group fully supported the direction of the design and made note of the areas for further development. The working group is pleased with the progress and excited about the design concepts we have seen.

Further to the meeting, the working group has agreed that consultation with the Senate would be appropriate on the proposed Centre Block infill options. A joint meeting of the House of Commons working group and the Senate LTVP subcommittee took place on April 7, 2021, during which we had a fulsome discussion on the potential infill above the Hall of Honour. The glazed roof enclosure of the light court above that Hall of Honour provides an opportunity to create new space above the Hall of Honour on three floors. The enclosed light court will also assist in achieving project goals on sustainability and accessibility. There was general consensus for the new space on the sixth-floor level of that infill to be used for shared parliamentary space.

On May 28 we met a second time with the Senate LTVP to consider food services and the placement of the cafeteria, as well as a potential café for the public in the Parliament welcome centre. We also discussed the possible uses of the fourth and fifth floor of the infill. We agreed to continue these discussions at our next joint meeting, where we will look at more detailed schematic designs for each of the fourth and fifth floors.

The working group has been very engaged in a detailed review of the issues and proposed schematic design approach for Centre Block and the new welcome centre. As you can see by the slides, the progress around the excavation continues in a fulsome way. We continue to be confident that parliamentarians' requirements are being taken into consideration. We are being kept abreast of issues and site construction work. We are very pleased with the progress and the opportunity to be involved in this project. The working group anticipates another meeting later this month. I will return to provide another update, as appropriate.

One further item to update you on is the progress on the Block 2 architectural design competition. Block 2, you will remember, is situated just across from the main lawn of the Commons, across Wellington, essentially between Metcalfe on one end and O'Connor on the other, and bordered by Sparks Street and Wellington.

As you may remember, I was tasked with representing the House of Commons as part of the parliamentary portion of the competition jury. I am joined by Mr. MacKinnon, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, and also Senator Plett, who represents the Senate of Canada. All of us are parliamentary jurors. Recent activities included closing the PSPC request for qualifications on this project on March 2, 2021, with 38 respondents submitting their candidacy to be considered for the Block 2 competition.

- (1235)

The competitors are world-class design firms, including a diverse range of Canadian firms and other consortiums from around the world. From the 38 submissions, PSPC narrowed the participants down to 12, and that's based on the competition criteria. An announcement on the 12 successful competitors will be forthcoming, likely later this month.

The first jury colloquium was held virtually on April 16, and I had the pleasure of meeting the other 26 jurors. I'm impressed with the diversity and calibre of the jurors. This is a very accomplished group of professionals with a range of design and technical expertise. The objective of the first colloquium was to meet and understand the procedure and rules of the competition and the role of the jury, to elect a jury chair, and to review and endorse the competition brief.

The chair is Bruce Haden, an architect and urban designer from Vancouver, nominated by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and supported by the jury. The vice-chair is Anne McIlroy, an architect and urban designer from Toronto.

The competition brief is the central document that will be provided to the 12 proponents, and it is, essentially, a complete and thorough description of the project and our expectations for the design. It describes the site, the constraints and opportunities, and most im-

portantly, the requirements. The jury chair has been actively working with PSPC, and the jury and will be endorsing the final edits to that competition brief. I understand that part has now been completed. The final version will be out to the 12 selected competitors in due course.

The next step for the jury will be a three-day workshop in September this year, when we will evaluate the design concepts submitted by the 12 participating competitors. The jury will be supported by a team of technical experts, including from the House of Commons administration. Of those 12, the jury will choose six short-listed participants who will proceed to stage two of the competition.

[*Translation*]

The final design proposals for stage 2 are expected in spring 2022. Thank you.

I am happy to take questions or elaborate on any of the information provided.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you very much, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Julian will ask the first question.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

It was truly an honour to attend Mr. Stanton's surprise party last week in the House of Commons. Everything that was said by everyone about you, Mr. Stanton, was from the heart. I thank you for your exemplary service, and we are also enormously grateful for the dossiers you have taken on outside the House, such as this one.

You mentioned the tarps for the Centre Block. The working group recommended the option of putting them on all four exterior facades, which will cost \$3.8 million.

I would like to know the cost of the other three options, before I speak again.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Mr Julian. I also thank you for your kind words.

The first option, which is to install neutral or sand-coloured tarps to blend in with the environment, would cost about \$1.5 million. The second option, which is to use a trompe l'oeil for the south facade, which faces Wellington Street, would cost about \$2.6 million. As for the third option, you already know the costs. There was a \$1.2-million difference between options 2 and 3.

• (1240)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

[English]

Yes, it is true that this \$2-million difference, going from a very spartan approach of \$1.2 million to a more elaborate approach, is more money. I certainly concede that.

My thinking is this. Having been to sites around the world and seeing how in Europe, for example, they preserve the monuments as they are renovating them by putting in place tarps so that people can actually see and envisage the monument itself, and seeing how tourists take pictures of that.... You wouldn't think that a tarp would be an attraction, but it is, and we know this. That's why this is increasingly the practice around the world when people travel to these sites. It's to make sure that they get the impression of what they see, even if it is under renovation.

Now, my riding is as far from Ottawa as it comes, and when my constituents go to Ottawa, it is a big deal. It's often a once-in-a-lifetime trip. I've intervened before on making sure that we keep things accessible. As you recall, Mr. Speaker, I intervened so that we kept the Library of Parliament open, which is not being renovated, so that constituents who come from British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador or Nunavut on that once-in-a-lifetime trip can actually access and visit the site.

Even though it is a significant amount of money—I don't doubt that—it seems to me that it is worth that additional expense. Families will often spend years saving up for that trip of a lifetime to come to Parliament Hill, only to see a very plain tarp that doesn't in any way reflect what they may have come to Ottawa to see on that once-in-a-lifetime trip. I tend to be quite critical if we're spending money that is not needed. I think that in this case it is an expenditure that we do need to make, and I certainly support the recommendation.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Are we just talking about the *trompe l'oeil* or are we talking about the presentation?

Okay. In that case, first of all, I will say that I appreciate the option that has been provided here for us. Mr. Julian mentioned that for many people it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come here to Ottawa. I know that certainly the last couple of years in particular have been incredibly hard on the tourism industry. Obviously, anything we can do to not take away further from visitor opportunities and experiences when and if they do choose to come to Ottawa is important. Often when they come to Ottawa, they'll go to other parts of the country as well, so I think it is important, and I appreciate that suggestion.

In regard to some of the other items, there were a number, the welcome centre being one, and there's the light court area, where the Senate seems to be suggesting fairly substantial additional expenditures to accommodate what they say are their needs. I'm not certain that there's agreement that those are necessarily needed. In

fact, the minister even has indicated that maybe she doesn't feel there's a need for some of the things the Senate is suggesting.

I'm wondering about that. How does that get resolved? What is done there? It does seem that there are maybe some fairly substantial requests being made there on their part. If there's a feeling amongst many that they're not needed, is there something this board can do to help facilitate appropriate decisions there?

• (1245)

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Mr. Richards.

To your first point with respect to the discussions, and to Mr. Julian as well, you have each summarized the very things that the working group discussed with respect to the *trompe l'oeil*, the notion that this is first and foremost for the incredible number of visitors who come not just to Ottawa but to Gatineau. This was strongly reinforced by the mayors, and the NCC was very clear on that. I think it was a persuasive argument and you have summarized it well.

On the other point, with respect to the working group on the House of Commons side, we are partners. The two chambers share responsibility for parliamentarians' input into the renovation plan. We have had two very constructive and excellent meetings. As soon as we can organize it, we will have another meeting to continue those discussions on the items I mentioned.

Clearly, for the final decision on points where there is disagreement, we are also of the view that the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, can and will, as you have seen this week, relay her concerns with respect to some of these issues.

Our working group won't necessarily be taking up that discussion, but I am sure that a number of those concerns will be topics of discussion between Minister Anand and our counterparts on the Senate side. We will continue to work co-operatively and constructively with them and to share our views on some of these issues candidly, as we have and will continue to do. Ultimately, however, the minister will take up those considerations.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any questions or comments?

I take it that we're all in accordance with these recommendations.

Very good.

Thank you very much, Mr. Stanton, and thank you to your team. Thank you for your patience as well.

Now we will go to number 7.

[Translation]

This is the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

[English]

We will hand it over to Mr. Janse.

Mr. Janse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eric Janse: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

A few weeks ago, the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying was established. You have before you the tentative budget request of \$50,000.

[*English*]

As this is a joint committee—Senate and House—the budget would be divided using the usual 70-30 formula.

The House portion would be \$35,000, and the recommendation is that this funding be taken from the envelope for all standing committees.

Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any questions or comments?

Seeing none, are we all in accordance with the recommendation? I see everyone nodding their heads in approval.

We will continue.

We are on number 8, the annual report on the members of the House of Commons workplace harassment and violence prevention policy for 2020-21.

Ms. Laframboise.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michelle Laframboise: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I am here today to present to the Board of Internal Economy the annual statistical report on the Members of the House of Commons Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy for 2020-2021.

As you know, the Chief Human Resources Officer of the House of Commons is required to provide an annual report of cases under this policy.

[*English*]

During the period covered by this report, two cases were managed by our office. We feel that the decrease in the number of cases this year is most likely a result of the pandemic and the current work-at-home situation.

A total of 22 inquiries were also submitted to the “respectful workplace” team. These inquiries involve things like obtaining information on the policy, accessing conflict resolution resources, coaching, reviewing of options, etc.

The annual report also speaks to the communication, training and awareness activities that have been undertaken and that will continue.

A communication from the Office of the Speaker will be sent to all members to notify them of the publication of this report. The availability of the report will also be announced on Twitter. In addition, the report will be available on the www.ourcommons.ca and sourced platforms.

I'm happy to answer any questions the board may have at this time.

● (1250)

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any questions or comments?

Not seeing any, is everyone in accordance with the recommendation?

[*Translation*]

Everyone concurs.

[*English*]

We're going to take two minutes to go in camera. We'll take care of the last issue, and then we can go.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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