



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 023**

Tuesday, May 31, 2022

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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





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• (1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee is meeting today to continue its work on the operational security of the parliamentary precinct along Wellington and Sparks streets. For the first half of the meeting, I would like to welcome the following witnesses. We have Mayor Bélisle with the City of Gatineau as well as Councillor McKenney with the City of Ottawa.

I will provide up to five minutes for opening comments for both of you to address committee.

I would just remind all colleagues and all guests that we are here in regard to a specific study, so if we can keep within that parameter, it would be greatly appreciated.

[Translation]

I'd like to welcome the Mayor of Gatineau.

Ms. Bélisle, you have the floor.

**Ms. France Bélisle (Mayor, City of Gatineau):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Good morning.

[English]

Chair, elected officials and members, I want to thank you for inviting me here today, as I fully appreciate the importance of this committee's study on expanding federal jurisdiction for the operational security of the parliamentary precinct.

[Translation]

I'm pleased to join you as mayor of Gatineau.

Gatineau is an entirely separate entity within the national capital region.

Through the National Capital Commission, or NCC, the federal government is the largest property owner in the capital. As such, it manages nearly 11% of the land on both sides of the river. In Gatineau, this includes several major green spaces, such as Jacques-Cartier Park, Moore Farm, a network of cycling paths and the 360-km<sup>2</sup> Gatineau Park, the iconic site in the Outaouais region.

However, Gatineau is much more than that. It is the francophone half of the capital, our capital. It is the workplace of thousands of public servants and home to tens of thousands of others, who cross the Ottawa River each day to serve Canadians.

The City of Gatineau is in favour of the proposal to expand the Parliamentary Precinct from a security standpoint. There is already good co-operation between the various police services, which worked together to manage interprovincial traffic during the pandemic and, more recently, during the trucker protests. It is important to have a unified command centre in an emergency to ensure sound management of events that have an impact on police operations.

In Gatineau, Laurier Street is part of Confederation Boulevard. The central part of that boulevard forms a loop that connects downtown Ottawa and downtown Gatineau. This ceremonial route passes in front of Parliament, heritage sites and museums, including the Canadian Museum of History. As you surely know, that museum is the most visited museum in the country and is located on Laurier Street in Gatineau.

The NCC oversees the visual identity and street furniture layout on Laurier Boulevard. Management agreements with the City of Gatineau do not present any problems. However, if the Parliamentary Precinct is expanded, additional federal funding is expected to be granted for its redesign and those agreements are expected to be improved.

I would like to open up new horizons. However, the issue that the government is looking at is much broader than just security. Once the issue is decided, the expansion of the Parliamentary Precinct will promote decisions on the ground to foster smooth and consistent development in the capital. This decision will become a lever for the federal government to fully assume its leadership in relation to interprovincial transport. For Gatineau, one of the most important issues to date is sustainable and structuring transportation that will facilitate travel, including between both sides of the river.

The population of the Ottawa-Gatineau region has almost tripled since 1970, from 581,000 to 1.4 million residents. Even greater growth is anticipated. However, no interprovincial transportation capacity has been added to the capital region in the last 50 years. Our public transit system, particularly our tramway project, must ensure traffic on the Portage Bridge and likely on Confederation Boulevard, on both sides of the river. This important infrastructure project is supported by Gatineau residents and must move ahead. The public transit office created at the NCC will also study the planning of possible interprovincial links for the tramway between Gatineau and Ottawa.

The issue of governance is a priority in this discussion. I reiterate the importance that we place on the leadership expected from the federal government, particularly the NCC, to assume its role and be the main representative for the various authorities. I am pleased that the issue is being discussed in an integrated long-term plan concerning interprovincial links.

The NCC has even committed to consider, in a subsequent phase, the implementation of a transit loop on Confederation Boulevard on both sides of the river. I therefore see this file as being closely linked to the issue before you, the expansion of the Parliamentary Precinct.

We have the opportunity to work together to create a transit network in the capital, at a time when the planet requires that decision-makers make every effort to fight greenhouse gases and when we are also responsible for making the best possible use of taxpayer dollars.

This decision allows Canada's capital to join other capitals around the world in relation to security concerns and an integrated vision of active and public transit.

The approach adopted must be in the public interest. This proposal is a unique opportunity for Canada to put words into action.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Again, welcome you to the committee.

[English]

Councillor McKenney, we will go to you for up to five minutes.

Thank you.

• (1115)

**Ms. Catherine McKenney (Councillor, City of Ottawa):** Thank you, Chair, members, for inviting me to speak with you today.

As you may know, I am the city councillor for Somerset ward in the City of Ottawa, and I am currently serving my second term. Prior to being elected, I was the direct strategic adviser to the deputy city manager at the city, giving me perspective on the administration of city policy and operations.

I've actually also worked on Parliament Hill. I was an assistant to two of your former colleagues, the Honourable Ed Broadbent and Paul Dewar, both of whom represented the area where I now serve. That area, Somerset ward, extends from the Rideau Canal west to

the light rail tracks that separate Little Italy and Chinatown from Hintonburg, and from the Ottawa River south to the Queensway. It is the heart of Ottawa and includes Parliament Hill and many federal buildings as well.

I'm guessing many of the restaurants and other businesses that many of you often patronize while in Ottawa serve those residents. These residents I represent are also your neighbours. They're your shopkeepers, your servers, your store clerks and much more. During the recent occupation of our downtown, they suffered.

Let me take a minute to expand on that. I'm sure you may have seen the extreme disorder that occurred on Wellington Street, but unless you took a walk a few blocks further south, you may not have seen the rest. It was pure chaos. The compounded result of multiple daily acts of aggression in our downtown neighbourhoods made life unbearable for most residents of Centretown.

Many residents left their homes. Some families sent their children to stay with relatives. My teenage daughter was forced to stay with friends after I received direct threats to my safety that identified our home.

You may ask, where were our police? They were protecting Parliament Hill. The City of Ottawa simply does not have the capacity to protect federal properties during major national events and also patrol our neighbourhoods.

That's why I wrote to the Prime Minister and the commissioner of the RCMP during the occupation, asking them to take over the parliamentary precinct. Doing so would have allowed the Ottawa Police Service to enforce laws throughout downtown.

We know there have been other times when the federal government has indicated an interest in taking over the full parliamentary precinct area, both for administration and policing. In 1989, many will remember, an assailant commandeered a bus and forced it to be driven onto Parliament Hill. That eight-hour standoff resulted in new security protocols for the precinct. Of course, more security was added after the 9/11 in 2001.

In 2012, the Auditor General of Canada published a report, received by the House of Commons, on parliamentary precinct security. It included several recommendations, including a unified security force to replace the RCMP, the House and Senate security, and the Ottawa Police Service, which were responsible for policing at the time. The Auditor General's main concern was jurisdictional confusion, which we certainly saw during the recent occupation.

Of course, that was also a question raised after the 2014 murder of Corporal Nathan Cirillo. One of the issues was that, as you know, he was attacked on Elgin Street, but the shooter moved quickly to Parliament Hill. This created a serious communications issue among the various security forces responsible for your safety.

In February 2022, the City of Ottawa adopted a motion, which I believe you all have, that says that the City of Ottawa work with its partners in the Government of Canada and the Ottawa Police Service to permanently transfer security responsibility for the Parliamentary Precinct, including the identified section of Wellington Street, to federal security forces.

• (1120)

This is significant, as the City of Ottawa's hesitancy to relinquish responsibility for the parliamentary precinct was one of the reasons that no serious action has been taken.

I'd like to close by commenting also on the closure of Wellington Street. We're the capital of Canada, and we see many protests in front of Parliament Hill. We welcome protests. We see many visitors to the area, whom we also welcome. By closing the blocks between Elgin Street and Bank Street, we will be able to increase that public realm for all Canadians to walk, cycle, take photos and show their pride in their nation. Our downtown has ample capacity to absorb any vehicular traffic that has been routed away from this section of Wellington Street.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I provided a lot of leniency and I thought you might get to the point, but we'll have plenty of time to exchange.

I want to thank you for your opening comments and for your presence here at committee.

We will have our first round of six minutes, starting with Mrs. Block, who will be followed by Mr. Naqvi.

[*Translation*]

We will now turn it over to Ms. Gaudreau and, finally, to Mr. Johns.

[*English*]

I want to point out that the motion that was referred to by Councillor McKenney was not shared with this committee. We do not have it in both official languages, so at this time I cannot share it. It is publicly available through a quick search, but I want to make sure that we're not suggesting that committee members have access to something that we have not yet officially been sent.

Mrs. Block, there are six minutes to you, through the chair. Thank you.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair

Through you, I would like to welcome our witnesses here this morning.

It's good to have you with us.

I am sure you are aware that the decision to embark on the expanded precinct security jurisdiction study was the result of a notice of motion that we received from one of our own members, calling on the committee to study the possibility of expanding federal jurisdiction for parliamentary security to include sections of Wellington Street and Sparks Street. Subsequently, we then had two members write to the committee, urging us to consider recommending that

the federal security jurisdiction be expanded to include Gatineau—essentially, downtown Ottawa and Gatineau—those areas within or adjacent to the national capital region's Confederation Boulevard ceremonial route.

I want to direct my first question, through you, Madam Chair, to Mayor Bélisle.

I'm wondering if you could confirm whether the City of Gatineau or its police services requested the federal government to invoke the Emergencies Act during the “freedom convoy”.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bélisle:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Block.

No, the City of Gatineau did not invoke any emergency measures. However, it provided considerable support to the RCMP, particularly in its response.

In Quebec, discussions are needed with Public Safety Canada and the Government of Quebec for emergency measures to be ordered. In that context, we managed what was happening in our jurisdiction and offered our assistance. The Gatineau police is used to having discussions with its partners. However, these are circumstances where, from a political standpoint, we have discussions with our government, the Government of Quebec, and we must explain that Gatineau is part of the capital and is therefore facing and experiencing what is happening in Ottawa.

With that in mind, we support what you are looking at. I think it would improve communication between security actors in our jurisdiction.

• (1125)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much.

Again, through you, Madam Chair, to Her Worship, your police chief told us earlier this month that during the “freedom convoy” protests, your police service was able to plan and act accordingly, based on existing lines of communication among police agencies. I just heard that you would share that perspective, from the answer that you gave me earlier.

I guess what I'm wondering is this: Do you believe that we need to create more jurisdictions here in the area that we are talking about?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bélisle:** Thank you for your question.

Yes, in terms of security on Laurier Street, we believe that the expansion of that perimeter would facilitate communication. What the City of Gatineau is seeking is for the federal government to recognize that we're already partners in managing Laurier Street and that any additional expenditures should be addressed under a protocol. However, we are entirely open to the idea, and in our opinion, the importance of asking the question and moving ahead has been demonstrated by recent events.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, through you, I would now like to direct a couple of my questions to Councillor McKenney.

I note, Councillor McKenney, that you are a potential mayoral candidate in the upcoming fall election and, having been a town councillor and mayor of a small community here in Saskatchewan, I know that we have different wards that we represent. I'm wondering if you are here today as a representative for city council or if you are here as a representative for your ward.

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Through you, Chair, I just want to make sure that I understand. I am here today as a representative for the ward, for Somerset ward, as a city councillor.

You are correct. I am registered as a mayoral candidate, but I continue to be the councillor for Somerset ward. I was in January and February and I continue to be. That is the perspective that I bring here today.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

To both Her Worship Mayor Bélisle and Councillor McKenney, where do each of you stand on the proposed routes for Gatineau's tramline into Ottawa?

I'll follow that up with another question, and then I'll turn it to both of you. If it were to run at grade on Wellington Street and the rest of the street was for pedestrians, do you think that this would help resolve many of the biggest potential security headaches in downtown Ottawa, not to mention potentially saving taxpayers up to \$900 million?

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mayor Bélisle for a quick answer to be followed by Councillor McKenney, because we've passed time.

Go ahead, Madam Mayor.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bélisle:** Thank you very much for the question. I like discussing the tramway.

Yes, the NCC has said that they are in favour of the tramway running on the surface of the Portage Bridge and on Wellington. We are working primarily in that direction.

I thank you for asking this question because, in terms of the decision you're considering for security reasons, I think we also need to consider it for managing transportation around Parliament. We feel the tramway is an excellent way to manage traffic volume and to ask the right questions about security, seeing how the tramway route can be influenced at this stage. We need the federal government for that, since the bridges we need to cross are under its authority, as is all traffic around Parliament.

That's where we are, Ms. Block, in terms of our tramway project.

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Yes, I do support the tramway at grade running on Wellington and making that very important connection to Gatineau.

One of the motions that I moved on the Wellington closure specifically talked about closing the street to vehicular traffic, and it

very specifically noted that we would still want it to maintain transit and, by transit, it's the tram that we had in mind.

Do I believe that it would solve security headaches? I think that any time you have more people in a space and you have a better public realm space, you just have a safer space. Certainly I don't believe that alone would preclude us from needing to expand the parliamentary precinct, however. I don't see how that would eliminate the need for that demarcation in responsibility between Ottawa police and federal police, in this case, the parliamentary precinct service, but I do very strongly support the tram on Wellington, yes.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Naqvi.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I'll be directing my questions through you to Councillor McKenney.

Councillor McKenney and I have had the privilege of both serving the Somerset ward, which is part of the Ottawa Centre riding. It's always a great pleasure to work with them.

Councillor, let me just give you a minute to finish your thought. In your initial comments, you were talking about vehicular traffic if Wellington Street is closed permanently. Right now, it is closed between Bank Street and Elgin Street.

What do you think the impact is going to be in Centretown and in the downtown area as a result of that closure if it's made permanent?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Thank you, Mr. Naqvi.

Through you Chair, I often like to refer to these sorts of changes in streets as openings, rather than closures.

I know I said closure, but we're really opening it to people. Having Wellington Street open to people would provide unique opportunities for extensive programming in front of the Parliament Buildings. Just last week we received a request for a ball hockey tournament with temporary rinks on Wellington for a few days this summer. Having chairs and the space in the public realm is always going to benefit residents, people who work downtown such as yourselves, and visitors. It just makes for a much better space.

I'll just end that by saying that when we built our light rail system, we removed much of our transit on Albert and Slater, which are streets three and four blocks to the south of Wellington. With the City of Gatineau investing in its transit with LRT into the city, we can see a further reduction in buses running on Albert and Slater. That has opened up a tremendous amount of capacity for wider sidewalks, cycling lanes and the movement of cars from Wellington onto those two streets that run east and west right through the downtown.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I'm assuming that Councillor McKenney supports the expansion of the parliamentary precinct to include Wellington Street and Sparks Street. I'd appreciate if they can confirm that.

In addition, if that takes place, can they speak about how it would mitigate, from a security and quality of life perspective, for citizens of Centretown and the many small businesses that are located there, if we were to have another major demonstration or occupation of the kind we saw most recently in January and February?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Yes, thank you for that question.

Through you Chair, back to the member, I do strongly support the precinct moving onto Wellington and Sparks Street north.

Again, we saw in January and February that a local police force could not do both. It could not be present through a major conflict on Wellington. It wasn't on the Hill. It wasn't on your grounds. It was on Wellington Street.

The local police force could not be present there through this major event and still have the capacity to be in the abutting neighbourhoods. They do about. The city of Ottawa is unique that way, and I think it's a good thing that our Parliament and residential neighbourhoods function together. At a time like this, it meant that police were not available to residents to be able to respond to safety concerns.

I believe that is what led to much of the chaos, aggressions and threats that we saw in our residential neighbourhoods through the occupation.

• (1135)

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you, Chair.

The councillor was talking about the impact of the occupation on the residents and businesses of the downtown core. It was chaotic and violent at times. That really impacted so many of our residents. Some of them are still recovering from that occupation.

Through you, Chair, to the councillor, did they support the federal government's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act as something they were advocating for?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Through you, Chair, yes I did. I supported it when the City of Ottawa declared an emergency and also the province. By the time we arrived into the third week, it was clear that, without the much stronger measures that the Emergencies Act provided, as our police chief at the time put it, it was getting more and more difficult to see how this would end through policing. That was frightening. It was a frightening thing for people to hear, people who had lived through at that point weeks of threats to themselves, to their security. By that point, yes, I did believe that we needed the Emergencies Act.

I would say that had we had in place what we're looking at today, where the federal government responded to the area that could be part of the parliamentary precinct, including Wellington and south to Sparks Street north, it would have certainly mitigated much of the chaos, I believe, early on and perhaps then we would not have needed the Emergencies Act.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for that exchange.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I also want to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

First, I'd like to congratulate you, Madam Mayor, for the mandate you've received. I must say that my secondary residence is in your city, so the loop and the problems Gatineau faces concern me.

Today, we want your observations on Gatineau's concerns, particularly on how to improve security, including in the Parliamentary Precinct.

I've heard several interesting elements, but before going into more detail, I'd like to know how you see a protocol of action, for example in relation to a command post. I didn't know that 11% of Gatineau was managed by the NCC. That's a large percentage.

Madam Mayor, given the repercussions of the occupation of Gatineau by the Farfadaas group, which I saw on a daily basis, do you fear other repercussions if another similar occupation were to occur, even if we find solutions to maximize and strengthen security on Wellington Street? How do you see things? Essentially, we're talking about a possible spread. I'd like your comments on that.

Then, my next question will be for Councillor McKenney.

• (1140)

**Ms. France Bélisle:** Thank you for the question, Ms. Gaudreau.

I'm very happy that you're a resident of Gatineau.

To answer your question, I'll give you a very concrete example. In my opinion, it should clearly illustrate the committee's concern or help it continue its consideration.

Of course, the occupation in Gatineau was not as imposing as the one in Ottawa. However, it was clear to us that we could not take action, because that would necessarily have had an impact on the environment in Ottawa, and vice versa. That is what you must really consider, taking into account the entire national capital, which includes Gatineau.

During the occupation, I said that, when Ottawa sneezed, Gatineau caught a cold. The opposite is also true. Your vision must therefore be broad, in terms of both the physical areas in question and the communications dimension. It must necessarily take into account both sides of the river. In an emergency, we know that quality communication is the key. Making decisions about a physical space, a ring, an environment, is one thing. However, taking a stance on communication in communications between police forces is just as key.

We're therefore in favour of a unified command post, to be set up temporarily in the context of an emergency to facilitate communication. We can't be forgotten.

During major events, people converge on places with symbolic value, like Parliament. However, there's a major overflow on our side of the river, whether because francophones are more familiar with Gatineau or for many other reasons, like the availability of land or hotels. There are obviously people who come to our side. We see it during unpleasant events, like the occupation, and during pleasant events, like the Ottawa marathon. There are pros and cons in all types of events, but we're married, so to speak. We're separated by a river and we're married. That needs to be recognized when making decisions for the region.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Also, Madam Mayor, I took part in the Ottawa marathon myself, but I didn't cross the bridge to Gatineau because I only did the 10K run. My partner crossed it because he did the marathon.

Indeed, there is a palpable union between the two cities. I want to reassure you. The previous witnesses confirmed that the command post, which brought together six police forces, as you are well aware, was set up during the first week, so it wasn't set up in advance or on the first day. Obviously, if a clear protocol and a command post are established in a timely manner, with all our vigilance and expertise, I think we can be reassured by that.

Finally, I also understand that you are in favour of redevelopment. That was my understanding from the discussion of the planned tramway, in particular. I thank you for that, Madam Mayor.

Ms. McKenney, I was moved to learn that so much time and energy was put into this specific event, even though it was done to the detriment of ongoing activities.

Do you think this type of demonstration could spread outside the current perimeter, even though people often want to protest near the Parliamentary Precinct?

Do you think a protocol and a command post could prevent that?  
[English]

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** I do believe that an integrated response is what was required during the January-February occupation. Obviously to have an integrated, comprehensive command post for security, for communications, would have meant that information flowed more freely. I did not see evidence that this was happening for two to three weeks.

I don't believe that expanding the precinct would necessarily push out the possibility of larger demonstrations. I'll be honest with you. I don't know that many people have any idea where the precinct starts and finishes. Even I was surprised by some of it, I'll be honest with you, when I started to look. I sit on the Sparks Street Business Improvement Area board of directors, and I also sit on the Sparks Street Mall Authority, which we share with the city, the NCC and the federal government, and the jurisdictional confusion just around Sparks Street is a challenge. I think very few people really understand the differences.

I just say I don't think it would lead to an expansion to Gatineau, to Wellington and south, by having the parliamentary precinct ex-

panded. People just show up and normally they just go up to Parliament. We welcome that. We welcome protests. We welcome events.

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Excellent. I want to thank you—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, I want to thank you for the additional time that you've given me. I know it could have repercussions on the second round of questions, but I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** I love that.

Thank you for your understanding.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to be here.

First, I want to thank both of you for enduring such a difficult task. As a former municipal councillor, I can't imagine taking on such the difficult challenge that you did. I want to commend you both on your work there.

Maybe, Councillor McKenney, you can talk about the experience of residents in the downtown core during the occupation. You cited a little bit about the fireworks, the harassment, the bullying. We got this message back home in British Columbia, where I live, that it was all peaceful, all happy. Can you talk a little bit about the impact on the mental health and the impact on residents in your ward?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Through you, Chair, thank you for that question.

It was the compounded result of the hundreds of daily threats of aggression that people felt in the downtown. If you went out and did your groceries and you happened to have a mask on, what happened was.... I'll be clear here. I've never suggested that it was the trucker from Saskatchewan or Canmore, or anywhere, who came and parked for two days and then left the next day. It was what was left behind, and it was the space that opened up for others to come into our downtown residential neighbourhoods because it was lawless. We had no protection, and there was an openness to the racism that we were seeing, the anti-Semitism and the homophobia.

What happened was that—especially on the weekends, I might say—hundreds and hundreds of people who were sympathetic poured in, but wouldn't allow people into grocery stores or would go into grocery stores and harass people. We had seniors who were terrified of leaving their apartments. People with rainbow flags had their windows broken, defecation on their front lawns. It was a constant.



There was probably no one act you could point at that resulted in severe harm, but it was the result of many, many aggressions over three and a half weeks, including horns that were being blown by dozens and dozens of trucks, not allowing people to sleep at night or to work during the day or to have any peace.

• (1150)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Can you speak about the impact on small businesses, the workers and the people in the community? There were closures of businesses and there was harassment, as we heard, from occupiers.

Can you give a bit of insight about the severe impact that had, especially on businesses that had already endured repeated closures throughout COVID?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Yes. Thank you for that question. You will hear from one of our BIA directors, I believe later today.

All of Bank Street ended up having to close its businesses. It was completely shut down. Bus shelters were taken over and made into makeshift coffee-serving spaces. There were fires being lit in barrels on Bank Street, which is our main street for business. The Rideau Centre closed down for the entire time.

In the end, it was estimated that we had \$264 million in lost wages and another \$72 million lost in business revenues. This was, again, as you pointed out, on the heels of COVID and shutdowns through COVID. The impact on our businesses and workers was significant and severe.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you for that. I really appreciate getting the scope of things and what it was like on the ground.

You talked about your council supporting the invoking of the Emergencies Act. Can you speak about the consultations and conversations with local indigenous communities around the invocation of the Emergencies Act?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Thank you for that question.

I'm not able to do that. It was the mayor who invoked the Emergencies Act, and he has the full authority to do so. That was not an issue that was brought in front of council and discussed or debated on.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Ultimately, it was supported by the City of Ottawa and the Province of Ontario with a Conservative premier. My home province of British Columbia supported it, and so did the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and the B.C. Assembly of First Nations. The former police chief for Ottawa Senator Vernon White and the former Conservative justice minister Peter MacKay supported this.

Was your council unanimous in support for invoking the Emergencies Act?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** For the federal invocation...?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Yes, that's correct—in asking for support.

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Thank you.

I can't speak to that. Again, it was never brought to council, so I can't tell you that 23 members of council supported invoking the Emergencies Act.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Can you talk about the importance of closing Wellington Street in terms of the long-term effects on transportation and tourism? I know you've been a huge advocate for cycling, and you have quite the cycling network that has a pretty big gap on Wellington Street. Can you talk about the opportunities there as well?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Absolutely.

There has always been great opportunity, well before what happened in January and February. Again, it benefits the city and visitors to Parliament. It allows us to create a public space where people can wander. They don't have to look both ways for traffic. If there is a tram, it allows for that interprovincial link between us and the city of Gatineau, which I believe has to become a stronger link.

You are correct. It is a missing link in our cycling infrastructure. It's part of our transportation master plan. It was always planned as a link, but having it open to pedestrians, visitors and cyclists of all ages and all abilities really will enhance the downtown for everyone.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Can you add a little more about how you see that closing Wellington Street will enhance security for Parliament Hill and for the city residents of Ottawa?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Yes, I don't believe that the closure of Wellington without the transfer of responsibility for security will necessarily enhance security, unless we're talking about security...cycling or walking and getting about. However, as I mentioned earlier, any time you have more people gathered in any space, it's inherently safer for all sorts of reasons. It's safer in the evening for people out walking their dogs, for women getting back from work. It's safer from the risk of vehicular collisions, etc. Any time we enhance any street in our city.... It's been shown everywhere. If you put in a bike lane, everybody's safer—drivers, pedestrians, cyclists.

As far as Wellington Street goes, I think just having it animated is inherently safer. We would need to fully animate it. We would need to make it a really special place.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you so much for that exchange.

Now we will close off with five more minutes to Mr. Vis, followed by five minutes to Mr. Fergus. Then we will be switching to our next panel.

Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today. You've given me a lot to think about.

To put it into context, I represent Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon in British Columbia. Four of the 12 photos in this year's Canadian Armed Forces calendar were the Canadian Armed Forces doing disaster recovery work in my riding, especially in the canyon where the village of Lytton was destroyed in a fire almost a year ago.

Councillor McKenney, what's more important to you, transferring downtown Ottawa to federal jurisdiction or closing Wellington Street to vehicles and the possibility of inclusion of the light-rail transit from Gatineau? These are both important priorities. What would be your top priority?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Thank you for that question. I'm not sure I can tell you that one is more important than the other. They both go hand in hand. I think they both are exceptionally important for different reasons and similar reasons.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I ask that question, because we very well could come to a conclusion at this study where Wellington Street is shut for security reasons, but federal jurisdiction is not transferred. That's something we as parliamentarians will be dealing with.

I remember in the news the letter you wrote on February 3, which was quite bold at the time, when you asked, as the elected representative for the Somerset ward, that the federal government and the RCMP assume "full operational control of Parliament Hill and the Parliamentary Precinct" so Ottawa's police service can be deployed into local neighbourhoods to restore peace and enforce laws.

Was your criticism also directed at the Parliamentary Protective Service and the work that they were conducting on Parliament Hill during the early days of the convoy protests?

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** No, that was not the intent of my ask. It was critical of Ottawa police at the time. I was critical of Ottawa police, mostly because I did not feel that their priority was residential neighbourhoods. I'm the city councillor, so my concern through all of this was the residents I represent.

Of course, like the rest of the country, we watched what happened and had concerns about what was happening on Wellington and at Parliament.

No, I was not being critical at that time of parliamentary precinct services. I was looking for an integrated response and for the federal government to take over policing.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Councillor.

This question, Madam Chair, will go to both the mayor and the councillor.

On April 25, the Canadian Police Association held their annual lobby day on the Hill. They had been watching very closely what happened in Ottawa, the resignation of the police chief and the continuation of the studies we're doing here on Parliament Hill. The Canadian Police Association proposed to me and many members of Parliament:

...that the federal government organize a national summit that brings together key stakeholders, including representatives of police executives, front-line police representatives, municipal and provincial officials responsible for public safety, and community-based organizations with experience in organizing public events, to establish a clear framework to coordinate the response to protests and demonstrations.

This is moving forward, largely with your ward in mind.

They went on:

This framework would include guidelines regarding the deployment of resources, use-of-force where applicable, member and public health and safety, and funding for police resources when additional personnel are required. As

well, with certain considerations taken for operational security, this framework should be publicly-accessible to ensure that communities have a better understanding of how protests are addressed by law enforcement.

I will add to that request from the Canadian Police Association that it almost seems that they would require some legislative action.

To both witnesses, would you support that key recommendation from the Canadian Police Association?

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Give a quick answer, Councillor McKenney, followed by the mayor.

Go ahead, Councillor McKenney.

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Yes, on first blush—this is my first time hearing about it—I would. I do believe that we needed an integrated response.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Madame Mayor.

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bélisle:** I also think that all discussions that could lead to appropriate and coordinated police action must of course be considered.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Fergus, you now have the floor for five minutes.

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the two witnesses who are with us today.

I certainly have questions for the mayor of our great city of Gatineau.

Ms. Bélisle, before you became mayor of Gatineau, you had a remarkable career as director general of Outaouais Tourism. My fellow members may not know that. You are therefore very well placed to appear before the committee, not only as mayor, but also as a person who has always worked to promote the Outaouais region and particularly the city of Gatineau within the national capital region.

During the occupation of downtown Ottawa, the Farfadaas set up in Gatineau. What were the consequences for residents on Hull Island and almost all residents of Gatineau, who needed access to the bridges to get to work or visit family on the other side of the river?

**Ms. France Bélisle:** Residents of Hull Island who live nearby obviously experienced inconveniences, particularly in relation to excessive noise, just like residents of Ottawa. It was certainly a bit harder to cross the bridges.

As I said in my opening remarks, thousands of federal government employees choose to live on this side of the river, so the occupation had a significant impact. The consolation prize is certainly that we're still working in a postpandemic hybrid model, meaning there's less traffic. There were nonetheless repercussions on our side of the river, hence the importance of having a vision of this cross-river perimeter when the City of Gatineau and the federal government must make decisions.

Clear directives are needed about the actions to be taken in the area. That's really what we're looking for.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Madam Mayor, Laurier Street, the Alexandra Bridge and the Portage Bridge were closed. It's Confederation Boulevard, the capital's ceremonial and discovery route.

Do you believe that we should examine the possibility of the federal government at least having oversight over security on the ceremonial route? That could also facilitate the tramway route from Gatineau to Ottawa and in downtown Gatineau.

**Ms. France Bélisle:** I certainly believe so, Mr. Fergus.

I can understand that the committee is first looking at security elements, but it cannot ignore the impact of decisions on other elements that affect our cities, including transportation, mobility of interprovincial tourists and the presence of Ontarians in Gatineau.

I mentioned Gatineau Park. Almost two million Ontarians, mostly from Ottawa, come to the Gatineau Park each year. That reality must be taken into account in your consideration of security in the Parliamentary Precinct.

The repercussions will affect not only security, but also transportation, mobility and tourism. I encourage you to not ignore that. That's my main message today, as mayor of Gatineau.

• (1205)

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** I remember the picnic five years ago on the Alexandra Bridge. It was one of your greatest publicity successes.

Could the possibility of creating this type of loop with Confederation Boulevard and reviewing the concept of ceremonial routes offer this type of opportunity in the future?

**Ms. France Bélisle:** I will put on my mayor's hat and my hat related to my former functions in the tourism field.

I think it's in the interest of Canada's capital, which includes Gatineau, to question what it does on both sides of the river to shine and stand out in the world, I had excellent relations with my colleagues at Ottawa Tourism, Outaouais Tourism and the City of Ottawa. We made significant progress. That vision of working together to allow the capital to stand out and shine is essential. The time is right to resolve security issues, but it's also an opportunity to stand out in the world as a dynamic capital that makes coherent choices.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** I'd like to ask a final question.

[*English*]

Madam Chair, through you to Councillor McKenney, I'd like to know if they support the transfer of ownership of Wellington from the city to the federal government.

**The Chair:** Please answer quickly.

**Ms. Catherine McKenney:** Thank you for that.

Yes, I most certainly do.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. That was really quick.

I would like to publicly acknowledge Mr. Fergus on his special day. Happy birthday on behalf of PROC committee members.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** With that, I want to thank our witnesses—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, may I make one request before this panel ends?

I was wondering if Councillor McKenney could send in the motion they pointed to, so it can be circulated to all the members. In lieu of that, if the councillor cannot, the clerk may be able to look it up online and send it to all of us.

**The Chair:** Consider it done.

Councillor McKenney, you're welcome to share it with us. Otherwise, I know it is publicly available, so we'll get that done.

With that, I want to thank both the mayor and councillor for joining us today and to thank them and members for the great exchange.

I hope you keep well and safe. If you think of anything else we should consider, please do not hesitate to send it in writing to the clerk.

Have a great day.

We'll switch panels. I will suspend for a minute.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

For the second part of our meeting, we will hear from the following community advocates: Mr. Claude Royer from the Alexandra Bridge Coalition, Mr. David McRobie, who will speak as an individual, Ms. Christine Leadman, who is responsible for the Bank Street Business Improvement Area, and Mr. Robert Plamondon from the Supporters of the Loop.

[*English*]

I'm going to ask that everyone keep their opening comments as tight as possible, up to a maximum of four minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Royer, welcome to the committee.

You have the floor.

**Mr. Claude Royer (Spokesperson, Alexandra Bridge Coalition):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Thank you, members of the committee, for welcoming me.

I'm here to represent the coalition for the Alexandra Bridge.

[Translation]

It is our understanding that the committee is seeking input on the repurposing of Wellington Street, namely in regard to its use for public transit and active transportation.

The Alexandra Bridge Coalition was created following the decision to demolish the Alexandra Bridge in 10 years. Unfortunately, that decision was made without a full analysis of options for retention and rehabilitation based on outdated goals that give priority to motor vehicle traffic. The coalition is made up of interprovincial and multidisciplinary organizations in the fields of heritage, sustainable development and the environment.

According to the Plan for Canada's Capital, which will guide the NCC for the next 50 years, Confederation Boulevard is intended to reflect Canada, creating a route that connects symbols and places of national significance and including a loop connecting the two sides of the river. A vision of Wellington Street without cars therefore naturally extends to the Alexandra Bridge, as both are an integral part of the Confederation Boulevard loop.

I note that the Alexandra Bridge was an important achievement 120 years ago that led to international fame for Canadian builders. The bridge is also recognized as a site of national historic significance by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering. It is part of our modern identity. It is also the picturesque element showcased more times than any other landmark in the NCC Plan for Canada's Capital. It is used for 40% of all active transportation crossings between the two sides of the river.

The coalition's position is to repurpose the historic landmark with a modern mission. We want to place priority on public transit and active transportation, noting that only 10% of vehicle crossings used the bridge before the pandemic.

As well, excluding motor vehicle transportation on the bridge would considerably reduce the damage caused by de-icing salt and, as a result, the costs for maintaining the beautiful structure. We feel the idea of creating a cross-shore tramway loop that includes the bridge and Wellington Street would be a complete solution. This position is also consistent with the principles that guided the Block 2 redevelopment here and on the other side of Wellington Street, that of reusing the carbon footprint of the historical structure and integrating modern transportation into something distinctive but coherent.

The coalition's efforts led to meetings with project managers from Public Works and Government Services Canada and the classification of the Alexandra Bridge as one of the 10 most endan-

gered heritage places in the country. There was some progress. The department revealed last month that it had commissioned a parallel study on the conversion of the bridge for tramway transportation, the preliminary findings of which are favourable. However, that study was conducted in secret. The coalition was not invited to take part and the parameters of the study are not known.

We are asking the committee to include an interprovincial tramway line in the planning for the redevelopment of Wellington Street, to ensure that the planning is compatible with a loop line that uses the Alexandra Bridge and, finally, to encourage the department to undertake transparent studies in that respect.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** You have perfectly respected your time.

Thank you, Mr. Royer.

[English]

Mr. McRobie, the pressure is on. You have up to four minutes.

Welcome.

**Mr. David McRobie (Architect, As an Individual):** Good afternoon.

My name is David McRobie. I'm a registered architect in Ontario and Quebec, founding principal of McRobie Architects + Interior Designers, and a fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

For the past 30 years our office has been located at 66 Queen Street in the heart of Ottawa's downtown core, two blocks south of Parliament Hill. While recognizing concerns regarding the security of the parliamentary precinct, born out by events of this past February, I will leave it to others appearing before this committee who are more qualified than I to discuss security challenges on the Hill and the ways in which to rectify them.

My presentation will focus on the timely opportunity before us to resolve these challenges and, in the process, to create an urban design legacy that transforms Wellington Street from a congested, unregulated thoroughfare for cars, trucks and buses through the heart of our national capital, to a generously landscaped pedestrian promenade befitting a G7 capital.

Establishing the eastern and western limits of the Wellington mall will depend on inputs from security specialists, traffic consultants, landscape architects and civil engineers, to name a few. My purpose today is to describe a vision that can align their interests in a common cause; that is, to create a superior urban space, which protects valued physical assets and human beings within the parliamentary precinct, while integrated within the fabric of the national capital.

You are likely aware of the federal government's recently concluded architectural and urban design competition for the parliamentary precinct block two. This important contribution to operations of Parliament will see a substantial investment in new construction and renovation of a collection of office buildings on Wellington Street from Metcalfe to O'Connor streets. While fronting Wellington Street, the envelope of this redevelopment will extend south to Sparks Street. In essence, PP block two will formally comprise and enclose the fourth phase of Parliament Hill, established by the Centre, East and West blocks.

Defining the southern edge of the Hill's open space parade ground, PP block two would be well served if its buildings fronted a Wellington mall rather than a congested, unsecured thoroughfare for cars crossing the Hill.

The Wellington mall could produce a superior urban promenade with ample space in its 30-metre cross-section to incorporate numerous amenities for pedestrians and cyclists. It would include a bidirectional tram link between Ottawa and Gatineau over the Portage Bridge, employing electric-powered, low-threshold vehicles for barrier-free access, similar to those found in numerous urban European capitals.

While the introduction of electric-powered, low-threshold vehicles between Gatineau and Wellington mall would ease the impact of the over 200,000 daily commutes between Ottawa and Gatineau, the greater vision could be to extend the tram line beyond the Wellington mall to create a transit loop encircling the Ottawa River basin, using both the Portage Bridge and the alignment of the Alexandra Bridge.

The loop would provide hop-on, hop-off access for citizens and visitors to the national capital, linking, in addition to federal offices, sites of cultural and historical interest like the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of History, the Byward Market, the War Museum and Victoria Island, to name but a few.

In conclusion, this vision is of a generously landscaped pedestrian promenade incorporating transit and cycling, shaded in summer and brightly lit in winter under a canopy of trees over its length. The Elgin, Metcalfe and O'Connor Street intersections could each feature urban-scale illuminated fountains, public art, sculptures and other symbols of Canada and its capital.

Currently a congested thoroughfare for cars, trucks, buses, bicycles and pedestrians during morning and afternoon commutes, Wellington Street is a facility that serves no one well and compromises the security of Parliament Hill. Removing this car, truck and bus traffic could showpiece 21st-century public transit technology, while creating a spectacular and memorable urban space for residents and visitors to our national capital.

Thank you.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Amazing. Welcome, Mr. McRobie. That's really well done.

The race is tight.

Ms. Leadman, we go over to you for up to four minutes, please.

**Ms. Christine Leadman (Executive Director, Bank Street Business Improvement Area):** Thank you.

My name is Christine Leadman, and I am the executive director of the Bank Street Business Improvement Area. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today in its consideration of expanding the parliamentary precinct.

My position today is reflective of the business members of the BIA and their desires as relevant stakeholders in the city of Ottawa. We understand the impacts by the recent activities and the groups that were here, and the probability that this will most likely not be a stand-alone scenario. We support the process of assessing the best way forward to avoid further disruptions like that the city experienced.

The impacts to the residents and businesses alike were unprecedented. However, there are two sides to the coin as the financial impacts to the businesses were, for many, worse than a full lockdown of the pandemic. This is largely due to the fact that the lack of access to the business area eliminated all potential for clients to come downtown. There was no pickup service for businesses such as SkipTheDishes or Uber Eats, a rerouting of public transit and no vehicle access for deliveries to businesses for their products and services or for their clients.

Our studies have shown that the average loss of sales was ascertained to be \$357,000 per day from Laurier on, south down Bank Street. Some businesses further south may possibly have been partially opened. Otherwise, the losses would have been in the range of more than \$500,000 per day.

These losses were based on the lack of access to the area by visitors, clients, employees and local residents. Despite the area having a high-modal split in transit and alternative modes of transportation, point of sale purchases are higher when clients are shopping in the area. Businesses have suffered significantly over the past two years. This was certainly exacerbated by the recent events.

However, I believe there are methods and means to avoid these types of disruptions in the future, without permanently shutting down access to Wellington Street. These can include several elements, which we'll leave to the experts in terms of policing, permitting and these types of abilities, to ensure that there are no blockages to the road network, that no encampments or semi-permanent structures are erected and that vehicle use is prohibited during protests.

As I said, my position here is in support of the businesses and the business area.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Wow, that was excellent. Thank you, and welcome to committee.

Mr. Plamondon, welcome. You have up to four minutes.

**Mr. Robert Plamondon (Supporters of the Loop):** Madam Chair and honourable members, adding Wellington Street to the parliamentary precinct is not a new idea. It is not a complex idea. It is a nation-building idea. We simply replace five lanes of trucks, buses and cars that bisect the parliamentary precinct with a space that welcomes Canadians and international visitors alike. It's a place to gather, to admire what are among the most magnificent Parliament buildings found anywhere in the world, a place to celebrate and learn about Canada, and a place for peaceful protest.

The current governance, ownership and security apparatus in and around the parliamentary precinct is awkward, if not dysfunctional. It's odd that the federal government has ownership and the RCMP full jurisdiction of Island Park Drive in a residential Ottawa neighbourhood but not Wellington Street or Sparks Street.

● (1225)

[Translation]

While serving on the board of directors of the National Capital Commission, and in the years thereafter, I proposed that Wellington Street become Canada's national pedestrian mall. I wrote numerous op-eds and made representations to all manner of government officials to that effect.

[English]

On the security question, I was thinking not of a convoy of trucks but of a single vehicle in an Oklahoma City terrorist incident in 1995, in which a rental truck was detonated in front of a federal building killing 168 people and causing 325 buildings to be demolished or damaged within a 16-block radius. While the security of the parliamentary precinct is an essential consideration in the use of Wellington Street, it was the idea of transforming it into a national pedestrian mall that captured the imagination and efforts of many citizens. Supporters of the vision organized as a group of citizens with a voice, a pen, a website, a petition and social media accounts, all with a goal of making our parliamentary precinct the best it could be.

The idea of marrying a national pedestrian mall with a tram to integrate the Ottawa and Gatineau transit systems in a loop project came naturally from our collaborative discussions. The transit loop would carry tremendous benefits for those who live, work and visit our national capital region. Imagine your constituents visiting the capital, touring Parliament Hill, then casually crossing Wellington Street to visit the Senate and the National War Memorial, and then hopping on a tram to the National Gallery and Nepean Point, to the Canadian Museum of History, to the Chaudière Falls, the War Museum, the Holocaust Monument, the Supreme Court and the Bank of Canada Museum. Imagine the federal public servants travelling seamlessly across provincial boundaries for work.

With a pedestrian mall and tram system in place, the opportunities to creatively showcase Canada's national capital are endless. Simply put, Parliament Hill inspires me and others to build a better Canada. I even ran for Parliament as a Progressive Conservative, 33 years ago, in the 1988 election, in the very riding where Parliament Hill is located. I urge all parliamentarians to think 25, 50 and 100 years ahead about what is in the best interests of our capital region and of Canada. It is a place for people and a tram, not trucks, buses and cars.

We—and by that, I mean the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the National Capital Commission and the federal government—have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to realign our parliamentary precinct for the safety and benefit of all Canadians. The timing to implement an inspiring vision for Canada's capital will never be better than it is today. All we need is vision and courage.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's excellent. Thank you very much.

If we travel at this pace, we are going to be excellent for two rounds. As always, all comments and questions are through the chair.

We are going to start with a six-minute round for the Bloc member as well as the NDP. I will be merging the first and second round together so you can maximize your time. For the Liberals and the Conservatives, whatever time you go over in your slot will be taken away from your fellow colleague in the next slot, so we can try to get out of here on time. I'm going to keep a clock.

For our guests, if you can try to keep your answers about the same length as the question or comment, that would be great. If witnesses are providing important information that's not repetitive, I will not take that time away from the member. I'll make sure they're compensated for it, just so we can continue to flow.

With that, we will be starting with Mr. McCauley followed by Mr. Ferguson, Madame Gaudreau and then Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. McCauley, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

To the witnesses, thanks for your information.

Through you, Madam Chair, I'd like to start with Ms. Leadman, please.

Could you just fill me in on what the boundaries of the BIA are, please?

● (1230)

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** My district is from Wellington Street to Catherine Street.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Which side of Bank Street is that on, and is it just solely Bank or...?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** It's mostly on Bank. There are a few exceptions that might encroach on some of the side streets, but very few.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm wondering if you're getting much feedback from your members about potential changes to policing and security jurisdictions.

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** I'm hearing nothing in that regard. It's mostly in terms of access to their businesses.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** What feedback are you getting about, perhaps, the changes being proposed—shutting down Wellington Street and others? I used to live in Ottawa. I live in Edmonton, and I know that our downtown has been severely affected by the COVID shutdowns, but I also know about the general problems that Ottawa shares in terms of homelessness, drugs and crime. What are the proposed changes going to do to your members?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** This is the concern of the businesses in shutting down Wellington: losing the access to their businesses, particularly those that are closer to the parliamentary precinct.

They suffered significantly during the protests and the occupation. As I said in my comments, it was worse than the full lockdown in the pandemic in terms of the impacts to them financially and business-wise and to their employees, because there was a significant, I guess, aggressive nature with some of the people, but at the same time, I think their concern is more about access to their businesses so that they don't suffer anymore.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Right, and I understand those concerns. I think we have to realize that, hopefully, this was a once-in-a-lifetime situation, and that the city, especially in policing, has learned how to prevent such things. However, these changes will be permanent for your members, will they not?

I'm more concerned about what the members and the businesses are thinking about in going forward with these changes, and not as much about what happened in a three-week period, difficult as it was. I don't foresee that happening again any time soon, but these are permanent changes.

Are they mostly concerned about the loss of traffic coming through Wellington and the loss of people coming into the area? Some of the witnesses seemed to be portraying that changing Wellington over will create a lot more traffic for downtown businesses. Are your members seeing the opposite?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** My businesses don't agree with the closure of the street. I have to say that, over the course of the last two years, I have closed down Bank Street in order to enable access to pedestrians and so on. We had studies done before and after, and there was a slight drop in business in the area when we did the street closures. There were concerns from the public about access to the area and lots of complaints.

Closure of a street does create a lot of concern for the businesses and anxiety, and also for the public because they don't feel that they can get down there easily. They have to renegotiate. People want easy, comfortable access. I mean, unfortunately... I've been doing this for 30 years in the BIA and this is the general feeling: parking and access to business. Unfortunately... People do travel mostly by vehicle to come to shop, and point of sale purchases are much higher when people are in their vehicles.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** All right. It sounds like what's proposed is almost a 24-hour-a-day permanent construction, closure and blockage.

Earlier, Councillor McKenney seemed to have the opposite view of what the constituents and the people in the area are looking for. Have you had these conversations with city hall or with the local councillor?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** The local councillor sits on our board. Unfortunately, sometimes residential concerns and business concerns don't necessarily align. Certainly, in this particular case with the businesses, they are not in alignment with the closure of Wellington Street.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Again, through you, Madam Chair, can you give me a ballpark on what crime has been like the last couple of years along Bank. Is it getting better? Is it getting worse?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** It is getting worse. This goes to the mental health issues and the drug addiction and homelessness issues. We have people who camp out in our business doorways, and in the back and the front. Needles, broken windows...it is continually getting worse.

In working with different agencies in the area, there are concerns from the social agencies as well of their inability to support the people, just because of the high level of violence and the different types of drugs that are on the street and are creating unsafe environments for the social workers as well.

• (1235)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm out of time. Thank you very much for the information.

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** You're most welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Fergus, you have up to six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I congratulate all the witnesses for their extraordinary presentations.

I have questions for several witnesses, but I'll first address Mr. Royer.

Mr. Royer, in your opinion, what are the potential benefits of expanding the Parliamentary Precinct for residents of Hull Island in terms of heritage security and quality of life?

**Mr. Claude Royer:** I should point out that I'm a resident of Hull Island, so I'm very close to what could become the loop or the enhanced Confederation Boulevard. Rethinking Wellington Street to facilitate access for more integrated public transit, such as the loop, would benefit people on both sides of the river who want to visit important sites on Confederation Boulevard.

It could also be advantageous, from a business standpoint, for people in my neighbourhood who could easily go to businesses on either side of Wellington Street simply by getting on a tramway.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you, Mr. Royer.

[*English*]

Mr. McRobie, are there any international examples of there being enhanced security yet greater access for people to the legislative precincts?

**Mr. David McRobie:** I'm sure there must be. I don't have them at the top of my mind, but I think it's important to note that this is unique. It's very difficult to compare this to almost any other example. Of course, we'll compare it where it's successful elsewhere, but it's very difficult to do that because what's being offered here is a unique possibility. This is not a commercial mall. In the history of, let's say, the last 25 years, approximately 200 malls in the United States have actually failed. Twenty-four have been successful and continue to be highly successful. That's because they offer a unique product. They're not trying to compete with regional shopping centres with free parking and everything else.

We have here a unique product in Wellington Street: Parliament Hill. What could be more unique than that?

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you very much.

Monsieur Plamondon, as you said in your testimony, this is not new. Why has this not happened before? Why is it different now?

**Mr. Robert Plamondon:** That's a very good question. It is an old idea, to have a tram that connects the national capital region. I think one of the big challenges has been the fact that our national capital region comprises two cities, two provinces, the National Capital Commission and the federal government. We simply have not had an alignment of interests that have drawn people towards the idea, which is why we came together as a group of citizens, not thinking about the short term or a coming election or the resistance that might be out there to changing traffic patterns. We were thinking 25, 50 and 100 years ahead, and that's why in our coalition we had former mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau, business leaders and other community leaders, who have said that the time is now right for this.

The other imperative is that Gatineau is now coming forward with a light rail transit system, which will complement and integrate with Ottawa's light rail transit system, so now we can create harmony. The Alexandra Bridge is about to go through a reconstruction. If we're going to do that, let's think long term about how we create a better national capital region that all Canadians can take pride in and through which we can promote our national unity.

Then, of course, there is the security threat, which now has just become that much more significant and important.

I think it was a good idea 20 years ago, and it's an even better idea today.

• (1240)

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you, Mr. Plamondon.

Madam Leadman, I have just a couple of questions. I believe in your testimony you indicated that you've been working in the BIA field for the past 30 years. Am I correct in understanding that?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** That's correct.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Are you familiar with other BIAs such as the King Street business improvement area in Toronto?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** I am.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** I understand from some research that the BIA initially opposed removing parking and car traffic on King Street in favour of having a tramway. I also understand that six months after they had started that project, the BIA changed its mind and realized that the revenues had grown. Is that your understanding as well?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** That's correct.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Why do you think the removal of car traffic led to an increase in sales for the businesses that were part of that BIA along King Street?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** I don't have an answer to that.

I would assume that a lot has to do with the local supports that those areas provide. King Street West is surrounded by a large residential population and, of course, Toronto has a much better transit system. I lived in Toronto and used the transit system regularly. Ottawa's transit system is a little unpredictable and not as consistent, I would have to say. I've lived in Montreal as well and lived on the Metro there.

Everything else has to align in order for the business areas to survive, and they have to have the supports and population to support it. Ottawa is a lot more spread out. People tend to travel more by car, and that is the situation, unfortunately. Our—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** I'm sorry—

**The Chair:** Don't be sorry. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their comments, which have me dreaming.

In the first part of the meeting, we asked what we could do to help each other. The main goal is to make the Parliamentary Precinct secure and determine whether we can expand it. In the end, it becomes clear that it's very important to examine the issue more closely—since we're at it, as we say. There have been proposals in the past, and due to certain obligations, we have to resolve the issue of security in the Parliamentary Precinct. I get the impression that it was shown today that it could all be consistent.

My questions are very simple.

First, I'm somewhat saddened that there is not enough transparency, particularly around the repurposing of the bridge.

Mr. Royer, do you have any specific requests in this respect? Why do you think there's not enough transparency?



**Mr. Claude Royer:** The coalition was able to meet with representatives from Public Works and Government Services Canada in early 2021. We reported flaws, particularly in relation to the analysis. However, it was then hard to see things moving in terms of the heritage analysis and the involvement of heritage engineers.

We believe that we can contribute and we would like to, not necessarily have the final word, but perhaps have a discussion with decision-makers at Public Works and Government Services Canada to achieve a good assessment and give the Alexandra Bridge a chance to remain an extraordinary emblem of Canadian engineering.

• (1245)

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you.

First, I'd like to say that, when referring to a "loop", in my opinion, it's not in the sense of a round trip. I think it would be a really good idea to give you this platform not only to answer questions, but also to share your opinion. We are wondering, among other things, how this opportunity to expand the Parliamentary Precinct could help us.

Mr. McRobie, maybe you could answer my question, given your extensive expertise. You have to assess all elements when making a proposal.

How would this be a positive thing in our study?

[English]

**Mr. David McRobie:** Why would it be possible for you to pull together everything that is required in order...? This is why I wouldn't pretend to say that the solutions are there. As an architect, I enjoy visual things and I'm very pleased that you have a package that demonstrates some of the ideas we have. However, the basis of it is the notion that it's a place for people, and that is probably the most important. The rest is all hardware, essentially.

There are ways of being able to deal with all of the program requirements for access and security and everything else that's involved in this. However, as long as it's a place for people that expands Parliament Hill, that's the important thing. It also therefore supports Sparks Street as a result. In other words, the strength of Sparks Street, I think will rise as a commercial presence with this project basically fronting Wellington Street.

I make the point that space is very important, and the planners of long ago were generous on Parliament Hill. We have to be equally generous when we approach the new PP block two project and not confine it, not push it back at the edge of a street. It should contribute to this mall.

I'm sorry about the long-winded answer.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Perfect.

I'd like to say that the current space cannot remain the same if we want the national capital to be important for a long time in terms of tourism. That's one reason why we want to move ahead on this issue.

Mr. Plamondon, you said that there were several concerns from the outset—not necessarily concerns related to protests or occupa-

tions, but concerns about all kinds of incidents that could occur when there is a lot of vehicle traffic.

Our objective is for there to be just one decision-maker, if I can put it that way. That would avoid not knowing who is responsible for what. During jurisdictional squabbles, incidents occur before anyone can take action. The goal is to find a good solution and a way to adjust the proposal to make it a pedestrian street.

Could you tell us what that would mean in terms of security?

[English]

**Mr. Robert Plamondon:** First, how do we find solutions in the complexity of the jurisdictions? Over our history in the national capital we've done that. It used to be that, for example, the Airport Parkway was owned by the National Capital Commission and it was transferred to the City of Ottawa. What I see to create simplicity here is simply for the City of Ottawa to transfer ownership of Wellington Street and Sparks Street to the federal government. Then we do not have confusion around jurisdiction, planning or security. There's total and absolute clarity.

Then we have [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] with O'Connor, Lyon or even Elgin, a better opportunity to create a coordinated plan that draws people into the national capital. I think they would access it primarily through light rail. There's really no parking on the Sparks Street Mall. There's no parking on Wellington Street at present. Most of the parking is in the office towers and streets before you get into the parliamentary precinct.

I think we do create clarity and there's an opportunity to do that through this project.

• (1250)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, if I may, I'd like to ask another question of Ms. Leadman, since my questions have been brief.

Ms. Leadman, we all agree that it is in fact a good solution. What are we lacking at this time to do it?

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Leadman, are you with us?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** Yes, I am. I'm sorry. I didn't understand the question.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Ms. Leadman, this morning, everyone seems to agree to move toward unification.

What are we lacking to do that?

[English]

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** I'm sorry. I don't understand the question, because I don't speak French that well.

**The Chair:** Do you not have translation, Ms. Leadman?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** No, I don't.

**The Chair:** On the bottom of your screen you should be able to pick “English”, and then you would be able to have translation for the whole meeting. That is noted.

We will perhaps get a question to you and ask you to maybe submit an answer in writing. How's that?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** That's perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

We will be moving on to Mr. Boulerice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to be with you today for this study.

I've lived in Montreal for 30 years. I know that different municipal administrations have profoundly changed the city, in particular by converting traffic lanes into pedestrian streets. There was a lot of concern for urban greening. Efforts were made to address heat islands and increase the availability of public transit and active transportation. That changed the quality of life for residents and opened up new opportunities for them. I find that an exciting prospect for the national capital.

Mr. Royer, you spoke about decisions made in relation to the Alexandra Bridge, the Confederation Boulevard loop, public transit and active transportation, and the exclusion of motor vehicle transportation.

I am more or less in favour of that, but I have concerns about social acceptability.

In your opinion, should we hold public consultations to explain the alternatives to people?

**Mr. Claude Royer:** There should indeed be public consultations, as with any decision or analysis of the options. Moreover, those consultations were not held by Public Works and Government Services Canada prior to making a decision.

Motor vehicle traffic represents only 10% of all traffic on the bridge. During closures for maintenance work, for example, there were not many complaints from people on the island or residents on either side of the river.

What's important to people is pedestrian and cyclist traffic. The replacement plans do not indicate how long pedestrians and cyclists will be without that link. There will therefore be significant temporary repercussions on the quality of life of people on both sides of the river.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Royer.

Mr. McRobie, one expression I like is “never waste a crisis” because a crisis is always an opportunity to clear the way and improve things. I think we're in that situation.

I was glad to hear that a unique product must be offered. You said that it was a place for people and that we're doing all this for them.

When I look at Wellington Street today, I clearly see that it is possible to have a tramway there and to plant trees. It is majestic, but it is not very user-friendly. There are no businesses or services for the pedestrians who will use it, whether residents or tourists.

What is your vision? How could we develop the street so that it has not just big beautiful buildings, but also some life?

[*English*]

**Mr. David McRobie:** I think perhaps the idea is to not be too concerned about the length of Wellington Street and how to program events for people through that length. This is the forecourt of Parliament Hill. One has to think in the north-south direction as much as the east-west and also of the linkages to the war monument, the National War Memorial, and to other features in the immediate area.

Rather than being concerned with activation and programming across its length, perhaps, there are plenty of considerations. Some of them are seasonal, for instance. This city changes dramatically in the winter, and there's a vision that we have of having sculptures illuminated at night and all kinds of ideas for programming that would bring people to what otherwise is now just a street filled with cars.

There is a programming aspect, but I want to encourage the idea that, with the expenditure of the federal government of hundreds of millions of dollars on the complex that is going to be created under PP2 immediately on the doorstep of Wellington Street, we can do better than Wellington Street. That PP2 project will itself be a draw because of its activation on the ground floor.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Plamondon. I'd like to ask you roughly the same question I just asked Mr. McRobie.

How do you see the new Wellington Street? Do you see it as a place for tourists, or as a place where there's life and that would be fun for families from Ottawa and Gatineau?

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Plamondon:** I see it as a national gathering place where people come together. Just imagine strolling down Wellington Street and looking up at all the institutions of our government. It's not just Parliament Hill. Walk down Wellington Street to see the Supreme Court as well as the Bank of Canada Museum and the Senate. There are many statues as well, as Mr. McRobie has said, with the redevelopment of PP2.

We have seen even on Wellington Street at various points in time where there have been pop-ups.... I wouldn't call them restaurants, but evening soirees where dinner is served and there are places for people to gather. I can envision that there could be monuments to certain aspects of Canadian history. It would take you down even to the Garden of the Provinces, for example, which probably most people in the national capital region don't know exists, but it's on Wellington Street.

I think it would introduce people to all of the institutions and probably make it a more welcoming walk and visit to go down to, for example, the Holocaust monument and others. This is going to be a place for your bikes and for walking that will be a natural attraction and will inspire Canadians and people around the world.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Plamondon.

I'm finished, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

[English]

Thank you.

Now we are going to have one more quick round, so committee will run about five to seven minutes late.

I believe the five minutes are for you, Mrs. Block.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My time will actually be taken by Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

That was great testimony again in the second round. To the coalition here, through you, Madam Chair, I really appreciate the renderings. There is a lot of inspiration there.

My first question will go to Ms. Leadman.

What impact, through you, Madam Chair, has the downtown business association felt from having public servants working from home? I know, having previously lived and worked in Ottawa, that a lot of the downtown business traffic comes from public servants and that the majority are still working remotely. What impact has that had on the bottom line of businesses that have traditionally supported public servants?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** Thank you very much.

Yes, the impact of the federal employees not being in their workplaces has been significant. We have seen some come back but the numbers are very minimal, and that includes the private sector.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Absolutely. Have you done any studies on the economic consequences of that?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** We're just in the process of doing these studies. They were interrupted by the protests. We redirected our consultant to look at the impacts of the protests, to give the federal government an idea of what those impacts were. When we see a loss of \$500,000 a day in sales, we're looking at probably slightly lower losses, but they would be.... Businesses are deciding whether they will continue to operate in the downtown core if they do not see the return of the federal government. This is what businesses are saying to us now. They're looking at their upcoming leases and deciding whether they will continue to lease in the downtown core.

• (1300)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you.

To Mr. Royer, through you, Madam Chair, has any analysis regarding the costs of upgrading the Alexandra Bridge been completed?

**Mr. Claude Royer:** There was a life-cost analysis performed on behalf of Public Works, which was delivered in 2018. It presents certain options for either maintaining the bridge or replacing it with what you would call an iconic signature bridge or a run-of-the-mill steel bridge. What's interesting is that this study concluded that having a signature bridge would still be more costly in any hypothesis than would be maintaining the current bridge. This fact has puzzled the coalition. What's the rationale for going ahead when you know the difference in costs are not clear and the economic advantage is not clear?

To add to that just one more thing, that study called for further studies of heritage and those studies were not done before a decision was made.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Through you, Madam Chair, hopefully we can stick a few studies and get a bridge constructed soon, because with inflation I'm assuming the 2018 numbers will be much higher today, and I think that is a critical piece of infrastructure.

Through you, Madam Chair, to Mr. McRobie, I was really impressed with the renderings you gave. I come from a riding that represents 31 indigenous bands and six different first nations, and I am wondering whether there's any indigenous representation on your committee and what your group might have considered around adding an indigenous component to the Wellington Street improvement.

**Mr. David McRobie:** I think it probably is more appropriate for Mr. Plamondon to answer that question rather than me.

**Mr. Robert Plamondon:** Through you, Madam Chair, yes, we have reached out to indigenous communities to get their views on the parliamentary precinct. I would say that there is not at this point any consensus or necessarily an alignment on this particular project itself, but there is ongoing discussion and making them aware of what the vision is.

**The Chair:** That's excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Naqvi, four minutes go to you.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you very much, Chair. Through you, I'll ask Ms. Leadman my first question.

The purpose of this study is to see if we expand the parliamentary precinct or not. That does not necessarily mean that Wellington Street will be closed. The idea is to help ensure that we don't have the kind of occupation in the future that we saw just recently and that, according to you, had a dire impact on our businesses. Would the Bank Street BIA be supportive of taking any steps necessary to mitigate future protests that are disruptive to businesses?

**Ms. Christine Leadman:** Definitely, and we feel that there is an integrated approach that can be taken. We were on the phone every day with local councillors, police and other politicians at every level throughout the whole process. It was soul wearying in terms of the impacts it was having, and I think had a great emotional and mental impact on our members as well.

We would be supportive of finding methods to ensure that the democratic right of protest is still there, but it has to be in an integrated approach and organized in a way so that the city and other agencies have an idea of what to expect and they can prepare in advance and not react, as opposed to what happened in the past.

● (1305)

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** That's great. Thank you.

For Mr. Plamondon, through you, Madam Chair, a lot of the ideas we've been talking about and your great vision around nation building seem to be a little long term in nature. Wellington Street is closed at the moment. What would you suggest could happen right now, immediately, to make Wellington Street more dynamic and more attractive for people to come to, especially as summer is upon us and we are soon to celebrate Canada Day?

**Mr. Robert Plamondon:** Through you, Madam Chair, this was the subject of an op-ed that I wrote in the Ottawa Citizen about bringing Wellington Street to life this current summer. To me, for those who are coming to the national capital, instead of the cement blocks to mark the areas where traffic is not allowed, they can be replaced with planters. There should be signs that say, "Welcome to the Parliamentary Precinct." We should be welcoming Canadians back to this particular space.

I heard earlier in testimony about an idea of even hosting a ball hockey tournament on Wellington Street. We could be having little pop-up bistros, as the National Capital Commission does at various places in the national capital region, at Remic Rapids and Patterson Creek. Imagine having a nice dinner at the foot of Parliament Hill and how attractive that would be.

For Canada's 150th, there was a grand dinner hosted on Wellington Street, at the foot of Parliament Hill. When tickets went on sale for that, it was sold out within an hour. This is a place where people want to come. We can animate the space and make it welcoming and not treat it as a no-go zone. Treat it as a place where Canadians are welcome to stroll and a great place to take pictures from, for Parliament Hill and elsewhere.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Perhaps, Madam Chair, if we can arrange for that article by Mr. Plamondon to be circulated to the committee as well, I think that would be very helpful. Maybe Mr. Plamondon and I can go for a run on Wellington Street soon as well, since we are both runners. If I have time, through you, I'd like to ask Mr. McRobie a question as well.

You've been talking about block two, or PP2, as you've referred to it, which is an exciting opportunity. Most recently, the design competition chose a winner. What steps do you think we have to take to ensure that at least the part of Wellington Street in front of that particular block is incorporated in some sort of pedestrian mall or "parliamentary square", as some people have referred to it?

**Mr. David McRobie:** I would say that in terms of the planning, it's important that there be breathing space for this project. That means not just limiting the front or the attachment of that project to Wellington Street. That is part of what we need to do. We need to have more space in order to accommodate a project of that size. A multi-building new heritage component is involved and some significant space, some significant passageways that go through to Sparks Street.

I don't think there's an easy answer to say, fine, we'll just take the frontage of that and somehow widen it or reduce Wellington Street. There's only so much real estate, and trying to reduce Wellington Street for just the facade or the face of that project, I think, would be a great mistake. We have to think of the whole way that it interacts with Parliament Hill and the downtown.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

On behalf of all PROC committee members, I really want to thank our guests for joining us today. If anything else comes up, please do not hesitate to share that with us in writing. If you sent it to the clerk, we will make sure it's circulated and considered.

With that, I really appreciate the fruitful exchange and everyone's leniency in giving us the extra 10 minutes.

I hope everyone keeps well and safe until the next time.

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