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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia (Speaker of the House of Commons): Good morning, everyone, on this beautiful sunny day. The weather is finally a bit milder than usual.

As usual, we'll begin by adopting the minutes of the previous meeting, that is, the meeting of December 11, 2025.

Does anyone wish to make any amendments to the minutes?

Since there are no amendments, we'll move on to the second item on the agenda, which is business arising from the previous meeting.

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron (Whip of the Bloc Québécois): This will be quick, Mr. Chair.

I would like us to go back to the letter we wrote to the minister regarding interpretation services.

Mr. MacKinnon, what I'm about to say is important.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We can hear you, Mr. Perron.

Yves Perron: What I'm going to say is important, Mr. MacKinnon. I just want you to hear it.

I have read the minister's letter, and I will try to speak calmly. I must admit that I was stunned when I saw the content of that letter, the tone used and the time it took to get the response. One thing I'm happy about is that we did get a response. When a whip writes, we don't get a response, but when the Board of Internal Economy writes, we get a response. We're already making progress. We should have gotten a response from the start. That's my first comment: that I never got a response. I don't think that makes sense. It's a bit of a lack of consideration. I'll put it politely. I have other words that come to mind.

I'm looking at the letter, Mr. Chair. It's a repeat of the same rhetoric we have been hearing since the beginning. We seem to be living in a parallel world, where all unicorns are pink and everything is going well. I'm trying not to sound too shocked, but interpretation is important.

There has been a decrease in quality. In the past few days, I watched video clips of a Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission meeting, for which unqualified subcontractors were hired. I watch that as a francophone who understands English, because I have that privilege. However, not all francophones have that privilege. I listen to the interpreters, and I understand absolutely nothing. I rewind; I listen, and then I pay attention to the English, which is a

little quieter, at the same time. I then realize that there are three, four, five sentences, the entire context, that the interpreter didn't interpret. He missed them.

I know this message isn't easy to hear. I don't want to be disrespectful to anyone who interprets for a living. However, I look at that, and I think that's what's coming if we don't do something. Now, I'm going to be told that the quality of work for parliamentarians won't be reduced. That's all well and good, but departmental services are also important to the public. Why should we be more important than the public? I have always believed that, as elected officials, we're here to serve Canadians. We don't need to be put on a pedestal or have special privileges.

What I understand from this letter is that we shouldn't worry, because we'll be okay, and we'll be able to understand what's being said. I agree; I talked about parliamentary privilege, and I defend it too. However, it's broader than that. This slippery slope, which I think is happening right now, is something I have seen and heard elsewhere.

Here, I have a minister who keeps saying that only interpreters accredited under strict standards can practise, and that those standards are still very strict. The exam may be good, but no one is answering my questions. Ultimately, all that's being said is that it's not one independent expert, but two independent experts who have been added. I'm explaining the situation to you because it's worth hearing. There are not one, but two independent experts. The second independent expert is the head of the translation bureau. Okay. That means that the minister considers the translation bureau director to be an independent expert. That was written seriously in an official letter from the minister to the Board of Internal Economy of Parliament. Wow!

I have a lot of respect for these people. I have said so before. I'm not attacking anyone, but when I'm told that the manager is independent, I think that's a bit much. It's almost like adding insult to injury. It makes no sense, Mr. Chair. I couldn't believe it, and I had to read the letter several times. I don't want to be disrespectful to anyone, including the minister, but I still want to be frank. It makes no sense to receive an insipid letter like that.

The letter says that we're being offered a new meeting with the executives. They came. Do you all remember the text they gave us before we questioned them? It said absolutely nothing. It was completely meaningless. We could read that they would ensure quality, that it would be great, that there would be no problem and that everything was fine in the best of all possible worlds.

However, who will pay when it comes down to it? Again, it will be francophones. Mr. Chair, there are members who experience this on a daily basis and who don't speak English. How many anglophone MPs don't speak French on the Hill? There are a whole lot of them. I understand that, because learning a language is hard.

• (1110)

In my group, too, I have people who don't speak English. They understand the meaning, but they also have to understand the subtleties to be able to take a precise political position.

I will tell you what francophones are experiencing. A member of my party gave me an example of the daily life of a francophone in the Parliament of Canada. The committee that this member sits on gets suspended because there's a minor concern and the parties want to negotiate. The two vice-chairs and the parliamentary secretary go off into a corner. They speak English to each other at 72 miles an hour. The francophone member is there. At the end, they turn to her and ask her what she thinks. Thank goodness it's necessary to get the Bloc Québécois's vote these days, otherwise I'm not sure they would have asked for her opinion. She answers that she didn't understand anything and asks that it be repeated in her language.

Last Friday, I don't know if you were there, but there was a debate in the House on the Standing Orders, and one of the proposals was to provide interpretation when committees are suspended. It wasn't to be difficult or make things expensive, but to ensure that everyone's rights were respected. We're supposed to have two official languages, and we'd like that to be true.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Am I correct in understanding that there should be interpretation when committees are suspended?

Yves Perron: Yes, that's one of the requests that was made last Friday.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Yves Perron: I say that in the general context where—

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Could you explain what that means?

Yves Perron: For example, the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security says that there's a disagreement between the parties and that he has to suspend the meeting for five minutes. The meeting is suspended, and members meet and chat. What the average person doesn't know is that this happens in English all the time. There are members of my party who don't speak English. This is a situation that occurred recently.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: What did you propose on Friday in that regard?

Yves Perron: We proposed providing interpretation.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's necessary to ensure that interpretation is available when members talk to each other on the sidelines of the meeting.

Is that correct?

Yves Perron: Yes. That will be debated in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. That's fine. I gave that example to tell you that we have proposed adjustments.

We strongly suggested that interpreters be on site during clause-by-clause consideration in committee, where this is very important. When they're remote, that causes problems for us, particularly in terms of delays and transitions. We also miss sentences. It's not like I'm saying I want candy. I want to understand what's going on, because I'm a parliamentarian. Those are some examples.

I'm talking about the minister, who tells me that everything is just fine and dandy. It makes no sense!

I'm going to continue and try not to take too long, but I still have a lot to say.

I'm told that there are two independent experts, that the translation bureau director is independent. I find that concept very interesting. I'm also told that, in any case, the other independent expert isn't the one who makes the final decision. However, he still has 50% of the votes. That raises some important questions.

In early December, I asked for something. The tendering process seemed to be on a very slippery slope. We aren't in such a hurry, so I asked if we could postpone this reform, suspend it. As you know, I didn't get a response. We wrote a letter with the help of the Board of Internal Economy. By the way, thank you again, Mr. Chair and members of the Board of Internal Economy, for agreeing to take the main points of my first letter and sending it on behalf of the board. That carried a lot more weight. The proof is that we got a response.

We asked that the reform be suspended so that we could get some answers. Not only are we not getting any answers, but...

It's worth reading it to you. It actually isn't long. It reads as follows:

With regard to your request to review the procurement process, I am pleased to inform you of our progress. The new procurement tool—standing offers [...]—is designed to increase operational flexibility, reduce administrative burdens and costs for Canada and suppliers, and to provide a more effective and streamlined process to ensure the provision of high-quality interpretation services. Interpreters will continue to uphold service quality.

We're saying that we're concerned as parliamentarians and representatives of all recognized parties in the House of Commons, including the Speaker of the House. That's a big deal. When we ask for a review, the minister replies that he's happy to report that everything is fine and dandy. That's what the paragraph says. I can't believe what we're being told. Maybe I'm naive, but it seems to me that we're intelligent enough to get a more structured response than that.

We're also being asked to meet with the executives again. We can certainly meet with them, but we have already met with them once. You saw the text they brought with them. We're going to get the same answers. They came, they knew they were going to change the review process, and they didn't even tell us about it. We found out by accident.

We're told that everything to do with the process is going just fine and dandy. I have the article from The Hill Times here. It says that in March 2025, 84 freelance interpreters submitted bids on interpretation work, but only 37 submitted a bid in response to the new call for tenders. Most interpreters said that they wouldn't bid on that call for tenders, because only the lowest bidders were wanted. The lowest bidders get the contracts, and we don't know what the quality of the work will be. I'm not saying that none of these people do high-quality work. I think I have taken those precautions, and I won't be misinterpreted by anyone.

Come on! It makes no sense. That's a 56% drop in the number of freelancers. After that, it will be said that there's a shortage, so the exam will be made easier, and there won't be a shortage anymore. Is it possible to act consistently and just give us a response? I don't have to agree at the end of the day, but can someone respond to me in a way where we can talk, so that I get the impression that we have sent a letter to an intelligent person who will be able to read it? I can't help but react to that. I don't want to, but...

While I'm at it, I'm almost happy that I didn't get a response to my first letter, if it gets me to say that.

I'm told that everything is fine, but I'll give you some examples.

They realized that there weren't many bidders, for various reasons. People want to protect their hearing health and don't necessarily want to work remotely. They don't want to work for cheap, and they want their expertise to be recognized. Many people turned down standing offers. The translation bureau then contacted them. They were told that there was a shortage of people. They were asked if they wanted to change their mind. These people were contacted by telephone and sometimes by email.

• (1115)

I have examples of correspondence where people say, "I said no the first time, and I'll say no again."

What's more, accredited interpreters now write in their signatures that they are independent interpreters accredited before 2025, which I find sad. Is it good for the profession and for the image of the House of Commons that people are dissociating themselves like that from the November exam, where the pass rate wasn't astronomical, but still much higher than usual? It went from an 11% pass rate to a 16.7% pass rate. That's still a significant increase.

That doesn't mean it's not good. However, right now, as Quebec francophones in the federal Parliament, we're saying that we want to be able to do our work in French, and we also want that for the other francophone elected officials, Franco-Ontarians, New Brunswickers and British Columbians. There's also a high proportion of francophones in Yukon. This isn't about separatism, it's about protecting the official language. I want this to be perceived properly. I find it unthinkable to get such an insipid response. I really don't understand. I would have been embarrassed to sign that. Seriously, you might as well not reply. In fact, it's like being told, "That is what we did. You didn't get an answer, but you insisted, so here's your answer."

I don't know what my colleagues think about this. We're being given a chance to have the officials back. I'm very concerned about

the interpreters' quality of life. Their working hours are being reduced, their compensation is being reduced and their auditory health and safety are being put at risk. I'm very concerned about French in this Parliament, in general, and about service in French to the public.

I invite you to listen to the clips from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's hearings. They are public. Look at them objectively and tell me if you understand anything. It makes no sense. That means that francophones who go there have to listen in English. That is unacceptable. Unless we say that there are no longer two official languages, let's stop pretending. However, that is not the situation.

I know I'm being unpleasant this morning, but my duty is to raise a red flag. In fact, I'm going to be super transparent with you. I'm going to get this off my chest. It feels like they're saying, "They'll whine a bit, but that will gradually fade, and now we're buying time." It feels like they're hoping we'll wind up exhausting ourselves and then no one will talk about it anymore. I'm telling you that's not going to happen. We're not going to let go of this. We want answers. We're very concerned, and we already have problems.

You know that a pilot project was launched. There are more and more remote interpreters. I have been compiling results. My team has been filling out tables. Every time there's an incident, I take note. There are chairs who won't extend my members' time at committee. There's a 10- or 15-second delay before the remote witness responds. Then the witness starts answering in English, and there's another delay before the remote interpreter starts speaking. The chair then tells the member that their time is up.

In committee, we have six minutes the first time and two and a half minutes after that. That's already not long to get to the bottom of things. Then we get even less time. Do you know what I noticed? You may not know this, Mr. Chair. I won't name names. I don't want to hurt anyone. These are people I generally respect, in any case. I've seen something in committee recently, and if you want details on this, we can discuss it privately. A number of francophone government members from Quebec, seeing the delays caused by interpretation and wanting to be able to ask all their questions, start speaking in English to avoid wasting time. Isn't that shocking?

I understand the logic. In the moment, they figure that in order not to waste time, they will speak in English. However, that's the slippery slope of assimilation. That's always how assimilation works. Look at the changing use of French outside Quebec and even in Quebec, in greater Montreal. That's what's happening. It's devious. We don't notice it. I sometimes chat with my colleagues who don't speak French. I really like my two whip colleagues. We get along great, but neither of them speaks French. I have to speak to them in English. I have no choice; we're in the hallway. However, in official business, can we ensure that our language is respected?

• (1120)

I think it's time we asked the minister to come and answer our questions, Mr. Chair.

That was a rather long monologue, but now I'm done.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I was going to ask you if that's what you wanted. Obviously, there's a problem.

Yves Perron: I see a major problem.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's crystal clear that there's a problem because otherwise, you wouldn't have talked at such length. I don't mean that you spoke too long, but you gave examples.

Yves Perron: Yes.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: The question is, how do we hold the department accountable?

Mr. MacKinnon, the floor is yours.

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

I won't take much more time.

I listened carefully to Mr. Perron, the Bloc Québécois whip. Obviously, we need to raise awareness. I thank him for doing so. We, too, are sensitive to that. We also have several unilingual franco-phone members in our parliamentary group. Obviously, whether you're unilingual, bilingual or trilingual, respect for official languages and the equality of their status in all parliamentary bodies and across the federal government is non-negotiable. If there are obstacles that prevent equal status from being respected, we absolutely must act to correct the problem, whether at the Board of Internal Economy, in the executive or in the legislature. It's as simple as that.

That said, Mr. Perron, I have enough experience to know that the procurement process can sometimes be confused with fundamental principles. We asked Public Services and Procurement Canada to provide us with interpretation services through the translation bureau. Departmental officials handle the procurement processes. They're the experts, whether we like it or not. Whether you trust them or not, they are the subject matter experts for the government. I think they're doing their job. I've met with them and worked with them, and I know how proud they are of the work they do. They obviously try to honour their commitments and achieve the objectives given to them by their client, in this case Parliament. I don't think it's up to us to get involved. Obviously, if it causes negative repercussions, they have to be corrected.

However, Mr. Chair, to rekindle on a daily basis our strong commitment to ensuring that official languages are respected in our proceedings, in our committees and in our sittings of Parliament, and to look at perhaps adding services in the margins of clause-by-clause considerations as suggested, we are open to all Mr. Perron's suggestions. I even find it useful. We get the same feedback from our MPs.

I think there's common ground on that. I think, Mr. Chair, that we could ask the House of Commons administration to see to it that interpretation services are improved so that we can colour a little outside the lines, so to speak, in terms of the services provided.

I'm a little more reticent about the procurement process. I would like to know more about the problems that are raised. On that point, there may still be a bit of work to be done between the House of Commons administration and Public Services and Procurement Canada. However, when it comes to the broad principles that Mr. Perron mentioned, we on the Liberal side and on the government side are very interested and very supportive of looking at the situation.

• (1125)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Warkentin, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Chris Warkentin (Chief Opposition Whip): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The issue has come up many times. Obviously, we've had concerns brought to us by different parties. It seems to be an ongoing and complex issue. The suggestion of bringing administration is one we've heard before, and it has resulted in, I think, the same frustration.

I'm wondering if there's the possibility of bringing the minister responsible and having a wide-ranging discussion. Rather than exchanging letters with the minister, we would simply have an opportunity for the minister to come and hear the concerns directly and then see if there are assurances the minister can provide to ensure that the right people are engaged to make sure that the concerns are addressed.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's a proposal, that the minister come. What I would add to that is.... I hear what Mr. Perron is saying, and he's pointing generally to some examples. However, it might be a good idea, if the minister is invited, to be able to present to the minister some very concrete examples. I understand that there's a problem, but I also come down to the need—that's how I understand better—to have a concrete example that we can latch on to. Mr. Perron was referring to a hearing; I think it was an energy board or a nuclear board. I'd like to hear how garbled or difficult it is to understand the French translation. I think it would be useful to present an example like that, plus many others. Mr. Perron suggests that he has been documenting, or that his party has been documenting, concrete examples. It would be instructive and a good way of engaging a discussion to have those examples put forth to whoever is appearing. Otherwise, from my point of view, we're speaking in generalities. When we speak in generalities, it's very easy for somebody to bat them away with other generalities, which is what seems to be happening.

However, the question is whether we invite the minister. I think that is what's on the floor here.

Mr. MacKinnon.

• (1130)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Sure.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, we agree.

[*Translation*]

What I would suggest, Mr. Perron, is to be well armed, so to speak, and to have good examples.

Yves Perron: Thank you for the openness. Don't worry, I'm going to be a big boy. I will be coming in very well documented.

What I wanted to raise is the apparent lack of concern when the quality seems to be declining and there are already problems. I'm a constructive guy. I just want to reframe the remarks I made this morning. They were in response to the letter. If we claim that we're going to look at things and work to improve them, then we have to respond as adults.

I just want to tell Mr. MacKinnon that I, too, have a great deal of respect for the people at the translation bureau. I never meant to be disrespectful. I'm also well aware that they are under a mandate. However, it seems to me that the purpose of the mandate was to save money with no concern whatsoever. That's what I wanted to avoid. I hope that got across. I hope that sharing our experience, particularly on remote interpretation, will lead the House to see that, if we want to reduce costs, there are other places to do so.

These are essential core values, and I thank my two colleagues for recognizing the importance of both official languages. Thank you for agreeing to invite the minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

If there are no further comments on the second item on the agenda, which is business arising from previous meetings, we will continue with the third item, which is the quarterly financial report for the third quarter of 2025-26.

I will ask Mr. St George and Ms. Côté to take their seats at the front of the room.

Paul St George (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am presenting the unaudited quarterly financial report for the third quarter of 2025-26.

As of December 31, spending is \$554.2 million, an increase of \$8.6 million over the previous fiscal year. The increase is mainly related to the election and initiatives approved by the Board of Internal Economy.

[*English*]

From a year-to-date perspective, spending remains closely aligned with the budget, reflecting a net variance of \$1.8 million or 0.3%, which will normalize by year-end. Overall, the House of Commons is operating within its approved authorities, and there are no other material variances to report to the board.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my presentation, and I welcome the board's questions.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are there questions or comments? No.

Thank you for your efficient presentation and also your vigilance in making sure that we stay on budget.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: It's greatly appreciated.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're on number four, which is the annual report on the "Members of the House of Commons Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy" for 2025.

I would invite Ms. Evangelidis to the front. She's already there, with Ms. Beauparlant.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Carolyne Evangelidis (Chief Human Resources Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning.

Today, I am presenting the 2025 annual report on the Members of the House of Commons Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy, which applies to members as employers as well as their employees.

From January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, there were 13 reports to the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. Eleven of those cases have been resolved and two are still ongoing.

• (1135)

[English]

The report also details the training and awareness activities related to this policy framework to further support members in their roles as employers and promote a healthy and safe workplace for all. We are continually reviewing our awareness training and implementing preventative measures to maintain a safe and healthy work environment for all.

We're happy to answer any questions you may have.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are there any questions or comments?

Monsieur Perron.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: Thank you very much for your brief presentation.

I read your report very carefully. The performance seems to me very good, and I wanted to tell you that. I think it's great that almost all cases are resolved outside the arbitration process. It is a sign that, even though we may not want to take further training to get up to speed, it seems to work very well. This is important in the current polarization and the pressure from social media that elected officials and political teams are under. People often lack judgment in their personal attacks, and so on.

I was pleased to read that and to see that, as employers, we are going above and beyond. I just wanted to applaud you.

Carolyne Evangelidis: After all, it's thanks to you that we have such good results.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Ms. Kayabaga, the floor is yours.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (Deputy House Leader of the Government, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, I want to thank the people who have done all the work to provide our employees with the resources they need to work in an environment where they feel well supported.

I think it's important that, when cases are reported, all the structures are in place to ensure that Members of Parliament and our employees have a healthy workplace and to resolve those cases in a timely manner.

I really wanted to thank you for all the work that's being done to encourage us and inform us of the new things we need to learn as we renew that commitment in order to stay current. That is also very important for the health of our employees.

So thank you very much for that work.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's really great.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Since there are none, we'll move on to item 5. We're getting into practicalities, since charging stations are really part of everyday life.

I invite Mr. Dicaire, the chief information officer of the House of Commons, and Jennifer Garrett, assistant deputy minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada, to speak to this topic. It's good to see you again, Ms. Garrett.

Mr. Dicaire, you have the floor.

Benoit Dicaire (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am appearing before the Board of Internal Economy today with my colleague Jennifer Garrett, assistant deputy minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada. We would like to submit for the Board of Internal Economy's approval price changes for electric charging stations, and get its support for the installation of at least one tier-3 electric charging station within the Parliamentary Precinct.

Last December, a group of six MPs wrote to the Speaker asking for a review of EV charging prices on the Hill. Members have raised concerns about the existing pricing model as well as the lack of tiered fast-charging stations.

[English]

On receipt of the letter, the House administration, with PSPC, analyzed the requests.

We evaluated the option to maintain the lower rate overnight between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m., eliminating idle fees during this period. This option can be implemented quickly, at no additional cost, and directly addresses the concerns raised.

Additionally, we analyzed the possibility of automatically stopping charging fees once the battery is fully charged, but it would require modifications to the charging station. This option is therefore not recommended right now.

Finally, the option of a reduced rate at all times was also analyzed. However, completely eliminating idling fees could reduce the availability of stations for other users. This option is also not recommended.

The House administration therefore recommends maintaining the charging rates of \$1.50 an hour for up to five hours and \$4 per hour after five hours between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. and setting a flat charging rate of \$1.50 per hour between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. every day of the week, including weekends.

With regard to the installation of the level three fast charging stations, an analysis has been completed, and it is recommended that the board endorse the accelerated installation by PSPC of a minimum of one level three charger on the precinct, as per the long-term vision and plan.

Jennifer and I are available to answer your questions.

• (1140)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Warkentin, go ahead.

Chris Warkentin: Can you update me on what the actual policy for overnight parking is for members?

Benoit Dicaire: That's a good question. The Sergeant-at-Arms manages the parking.

Pat McDonell (Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Commons): Hi.

I want to be clear, so I'm going to have to come back to the board with the answer to that, sir.

Chris Warkentin: Thank you. I appreciate that.

We have several members who have been instructed that they cannot park their vehicles overnight on the precinct. Multiple members have received a series of notices. In some cases, they were notices to move. Maybe there's—

Pat McDonell: Okay. I thought you were referring to plugging in overnight.

Chris Warkentin: No, just—

Pat McDonell: That policy's changed, and I don't think the change is known. We'll send something out.

The members can park their vehicles overnight. The old policy was that they were not allowed to park overnight due to snow removal and all sorts of small complications, but we've moved beyond that, so they are allowed to park their vehicles overnight.

Chris Warkentin: I wanted to make sure it was consistent and that this would be allowable under the rules.

Pat McDonell: It is allowable, yes.

Chris Warkentin: My second question is this: The last time we saw the long-term vision and plan, it was going to strip out significant portions of the parking on the precinct.

Where would this new charging station be located that would be in alignment with the long-term vision and plan?

Benoit Dicaire: I'll start, and then I'll go to Jennifer.

Through you, Mr. Chair, of course, you saw the plan, and it's going to change significantly on the precinct over the next few years. One part of the analysis that has to be done around this particular scenario is what the upcoming projects are that could—

Chris Warkentin: Before we move forward with that, we have generally opposed the long-term vision planning as it relates to parking.

It's a frustration that I have. We've had that presentation, and there were concerns raised about it, but it seems like we're plowing ahead.

I have no problem with the addition of a charging station. What I don't support is putting it in only to then strip it out or replace the scarce parking we currently have with a charging station and have subsequent projects that will reduce parking on the precinct.

I'd like to flag that it's my understanding that this board has opposed the long-term vision planning of stripping out the parking.

We don't support that. I'd like to know what the actual long-term vision....

This seems to be a piecemeal approach that doesn't match the long-term vision and plan of the administration, even though we oppose that.

We'd like to know where that actually is landing at this point.

Jennifer Garrett (Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada): Thank you for the question.

Rest assured, we have the same concerns. We're not here today to dictate where we would put that level three charger. We need to work with the administration to make sure that the investment stays permanent.

I will say that there's a difference between parking reductions and the application of EV stations within the precinct. The goal associated with the long-term vision and plan that's been agreed to with the House of Commons administration is to have, at the end of the day—think 2032 time frame—9% coverage of EV stations within the precinct.

Rest assured at this time that we will be bringing those parking implications forward as those projects come forward. It's not piecemeal. Our goal is, when we bring a project online and we have to take parking away, to try to find parking, but maybe not in as close proximity as what you might need, because there is a dearth of parking in the Ottawa downtown right now. Both private and public sectors are feeling that pain.

As an example, we could not rehabilitate Confederation, which is a building in great need of rehabilitation. It is targeted to go under rehabilitation in the mid 2030s time frame. We will need, as an example, to take some parking away for that. That's not the best spot to put a permanent level three charger, because it would be coming off-line. At the same time, until we know more details of how that rehabilitation is going to execute and what the lay-down requirements are.... We won't know that until we get further on in the project planning, but it is our intent to always maintain parking, at a minimum for parliamentarians.

• (1145)

Chris Warkentin: Okay.

It sounds like this hasn't been confirmed, so I would oppose building a new charging station until we're fully updated as to what the long-term vision plan is for the parking.

I hear that you agree with my concern but actually not my concern, which is that I don't want to see a reduction of parking on the precinct, full stop. I would like to see what the plan is and where this would be located to resolve the concerns that have been identified at this table with regard to parking before we start putting in additional infrastructure.

What I've seen at this table before is that there's a suggestion that you share a concern. The administration goes off and makes a plan, establishes an infrastructure, and then it sets into permanent place something we haven't agreed to. I want to say that I do not agree to that portion of the plan until we see some clarity on the long-term parking.

Thank you.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Chief Government Whip): Thank you very much.

Thank you for coming back to us on this.

I believe it was Mr. Perron who had originally voiced some concerns on this, and I think that the first recommendation addresses the core point that he had, which is that, for people to charge, some people might not find an available spot. It doesn't become available until maybe 6:00 p.m. or 7 p.m., so they end up plugging it in, but it's done charging by midnight, and then that new rate kicks in afterwards.

I think that first recommendation really addressed that, so thank you for coming back so quickly on that.

I think that it's a really good idea to move fast with those level three chargers. To satisfy Mr. Warkentin's point, perhaps you could take one of the level twos and replace that—remove a level two. You can't put it in the same spot.

I understand that it requires an increase in the infrastructure, but I just meant that from the physical perspective of utilizing a spot that's currently used for a level two charger. If the necessary upgrades were done, you could just use that same spot but for a level three instead. Therefore, I think Mr. Warkentin's point of not taking away any more spots for EV charging would be satisfied, because it's the same overall number of spots.

I'm easy either way, whether you proceed quickly with that or not. The reality is that there are a lot of fast charging spots in and around the area, and if the House of Commons isn't going to make the money off people using them, then somebody else nearby will.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dicaire, thank you for your presentation and your brief answer.

I would just like to clarify something. This might reassure Mr. Warkentin.

When we say a group of six members, I think I told the Board of Internal Economy, or BOIE, what originally happened when I

brought forward the letter, which was ironically signed by six Liberal members. A Liberal MP who was canvassing my caucus gave me a copy of the letter. We had a BOIE meeting coming up, and I thought it was worthwhile, so I quickly talked to my caucus members about it.

When I brought forward the letter, I said that six members had signed it, but that we could get more signatures if we took the time to get it signed, which I hadn't done, because I received the letter the day before. That explains the small number of MPs who signed it. Maybe that will make a difference for Mr. Warkentin. In the Bloc Québécois caucus alone, there are about ten members who have an electric car and who, I'm sure, will approve the request, as will the others.

In my opinion, all the requests for a faster charging station would be approved by the majority of MPs. I just wanted to clarify that there are six MPs who signed, but the number in support is actually much higher. If necessary, we can go and get those signatures. I can do that myself. I brought the letter forward quickly so it could be handled quickly. That's my first comment.

Thank you for your quick, practical and appropriate response to our requests. We also understand your constraints in terms of technology, adjustment and pricing. It's not always easy, given the charging stations we have. We understand all that. I really appreciate your first recommendation. Basically, it is exactly what members wanted so they could charge their vehicles overnight.

Permission to leave a vehicle onsite overnight was also requested. I understood Mr. Warkentin's question. From what the sergeant-at-arms said, that policy has been changed. Otherwise, I was also told that it was possible to get special permission to leave a vehicle overnight. So it is possible. In fact, I recommend that we all leave our vehicles overnight, the night of the employee Christmas party, for instance. We have to be able to leave our vehicle. It is a necessary, reasonable and smart thing to do.

As to the second recommendation, I would have gone even further. In fact, we've already discussed this. Why install just one station? I would suggest installing more than that. I understand that the electricity infrastructure is old and that significant work is involved. I also understand that we are in transition and that there is more work ahead. I am in favour of installing at least one station, in the hope that there will be more than one.

I would like you to talk about feasibility. I also thought of using current parking spaces, but was told that was not possible.

In the recommendation that the BOIE support PSPC's accelerated installation of at least one tier-3 charging station in the precinct, according to the long term vision and plan, could we add "without restricting the current traditional parking spaces"?"

Do you think that you could put that in your tool box and find a solution to promptly address Mr. Warkentin's fear of retaliation?

I understand that fear, because, since we have variable schedules and we sometimes arrive on the Hill a bit later, it can be hard to find parking at times. There are a lot of people who park their vehicles. I understand that he wants to make sure that members have parking spots. Our schedules are already busy enough without having to spend 20 minutes looking for a parking spot.

So I completely agree with what Mr. Warkentin said, but I believe in the quick charging stations. If you install one, you will ease the pressure on the others. You will also make life easier for a number of MPs. If we could add "without restricting current parking spaces" to the recommendation, that would be great.

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

Thank you.

• (1150)

Benoit Dicaire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Perron, that's something we could evaluate.

As my colleague Ms. Garrett mentioned, the House of Commons administration first looked at whether they could just convert a tier-2 station to a tier-3 station, but that's not possible, unfortunately, because of the infrastructure needed. However, when it comes time to decide on the location, which has not yet been decided, we could consider your proposal, if that is what the BOIE wants.

Yves Perron: I officially move that then, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: We all agree on the new pricing system. That's fine. There is consensus on that.

As for an additional tier-3 charging station, we're waiting to see what you propose to us as part of a broader parking plan.

Is that correct? You're going to get back to us.

Yves Perron: If I may say so, I wouldn't wait. I would add "without restricting the current parking spaces" to what is being adopted today.

That way, if it's not possible, it won't happen.

Did I understand that correctly?

[*English*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Warkentin, go ahead.

Chris Warkentin: We've already been told that there will be a reduction in parking or a change as it moves forward. If somebody says it's not going to impact any of the parking today, that's not my concern. My issue is, what does it look like in the future?

It's not that a lot of members actually park on the Hill, that I'm aware of. It's actually the staff who find it impossible to find parking, especially in the winter. It's a real challenge to get to work. I'm concerned about staff parking. This place isn't shrinking; it's grow-

ing. I'm very concerned about what we have had presented in the past. I just don't want to piecemeal this onto this yet and lock us into a future we haven't agreed to.

If there is this parking plan that will resolve all of our concerns, we'll meet again in a few weeks and we'd be happy to take a look at that to see exactly where you're going to stick it.

Let's proceed with getting the rates in place, and then, a few weeks down the road, we'll get the plan. We'll see if that meets with our concerns, and then we'll move on.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Mr. Perron, you have the floor.

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I find it hard to understand why this is worrisome.

Mr. Warkentin, if the mandate says "without restricting current traditional parking spaces", parking space will not be reduced. If they can't do it, they won't. When you talk about a long-term vision and getting involved, we can get involved in other, related work and there will be enough work for the next 10 years.

A lot of MPs have electric cars. Having access to a tier-3 charging station would make life easier for a lot of people. I think, and I respectfully suggest to you that, if we add the restriction, we don't need to tell them to come back to see us. We can ask them to do this, and when they see that it is not possible in one location, but possible in another, and no parking spaces will be eliminated, either for employees or for MPs. When we say "current parking spaces", that means all parking spaces on the Hill. I think we could ask them to work on that and ask them today to do that.

[*English*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'll go to Mr. Gerretsen, but first I'll summarize.

Basically, Monsieur Perron was saying we would be in favour of a level three charging station, but only if it meets your condition of not taking away any of the current, traditional type of parking. Is that the proper interpretation?

Chris Warkentin: My submission would be this: I support the new infrastructure if it can be guaranteed that it will not impact the current number of parking stalls on the precinct in the long-term vision plan.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's where we have a bit of a snag.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: From the perspective of somebody who drives an EV, parks and charges here all the time, I'm quite indifferent about whether or not we have level three chargers. The reality of the matter is, if you're somebody who works here, it's going to be cheaper and better on your battery to charge on a level two, because you can leave your vehicle there for a long time and it takes a lot longer to charge. The only people who are going to really want to use a level three charger are those who are coming here for a short period of time, so if there's a staffer who's coming here....

The way I do it is I get here on a Monday morning, plug it in and just let it keep charging on that slower charge until I leave at six or seven o'clock. That's actually a lot cheaper and a lot better for the battery.

I'm quite indifferent as to whether or not we install level three chargers. I would actually much rather see a lot more level two chargers, because the reality is that if these parking spots are available to members overnight, I might just start parking here overnight rather than bringing it back to my apartment. I'll end up getting all the charge I need.

I can appreciate why you might want one or two for these people who might need to charge really quickly, but I just don't....

I think it's a good investment to make, because I think there's a return on that investment, but for me, this is not a deal breaker. If it's going to be hijacked by the issue of parking spaces generally speaking, I'd just as soon let it go.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Perron.

Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I find the English word "hijacked" a bit funny.

I think we're getting off topic. If someone starts saying that they have an electric car, that they have a charging station at their apartment, that they don't need it to charge their car here and that, ultimately, they don't care, that's a completely different matter.

This is a general proposal. It concerns MPs in general, as well as employees in general. A lot of people have electric cars.

Mr. Gerretsen would rather charge his car slowly. Good for him, because his battery will last longer. For other people, the situation may be different. There might be some people who are on the Hill for a shorter period or who simply don't want to manage that, or don't want to leave their car there all day and have to plug in their car for two hours.

What we need to say, collectively, is that a fast charging station will allow more people to charge their cars without monopolizing spaces. Mr. Warkentin should also realize that more cars can be charged at the same time with a fast charging station than with a tier-2 station. It would take up fewer parking spaces, in the long term, even considering future projects.

As I understand it, there is no consensus. I do not understand why though, Mr. Chair. I wanted to add "without restricting parking spaces". It doesn't seem to be working. That's fine.

● (1200)

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: I think we've covered it.

The conclusion I draw from all this is that we agree on the new pricing system.

As to the tier-3 charging station, however, we will have to wait for a broader discussion on the long-term parking plan.

So, can we—

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: We move forward with the first recommendation, not the second one.

Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's right.

[*Translation*]

If it's okay, we can go in camera and come back to the two remaining items, I believe. We should be able to finish up early.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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