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Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), the committee is meeting for a briefing on Parliament Hill's long-term vision and plan and Centre Block rehabilitation. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

Before I continue, I would ask all in-person participants to consult the guidelines. There is a short video on the card in front of you. Please consult it, as it is important for the health and safety of everyone present, especially our interpreters.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the members. All comments should be addressed to the chair. For members in the room, raise your hand, and for members on Zoom, if you do find yourself there—you know the drill—use the “raise hand” function.

I would like to welcome today's witnesses.

We have Tom Kmiec, member of Parliament and chair of the working group on the LTVP and Centre Block rehabilitation.

From the House of Commons, we have Jeffrey LeBlanc, deputy clerk, procedure, and Benoit Dicaire, chief information officer.

From PSPC, we have Jennifer Garrett, assistant deputy minister, parliamentary precinct.

Before I begin, I would like to, on behalf of the committee—occasionally they'll let me speak on behalf of all the members here—say thank you for the incredible tour. I know a lot of questions were answered during that tour, as it was very informative, but we will endeavour to ask a few more.

Mr. Kmiec will begin, and then we will proceed.

The floor is yours.

Tom Kmiec (Chair, Working Group on the LTVP and the Centre Block Rehabilitation, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have speaking notes for this. If you'll indulge me, I'll go through them.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this update on behalf of the working group on the Centre Block rehabilitation and the long term vision and plan, or LTVP. We understand that members of this committee have a strong interest in the LTVP and what Centre Block will look like when it reopens, how much will remain familiar, what will be restored or modernized, how the building is being adapted to meet future needs and how costs are being managed.

These considerations have been central to the working group's deliberations, particularly with respect to the chamber, the galleries, the lobbies and the integration of family-friendly amenities, modern workspaces for members including enhanced technology, circulation, safety and security improvements, as well as accessibility enhancements.

The working group was established by the Board of Internal Economy in March 2020 to examine and provide recommendations on the broader long term vision and plan and the Centre Block rehabilitation. It includes members from all recognized parties and is chaired by the Speaker or their delegate, with the chief executive administrator of the House serving as secretary. While the board retains ultimate decision-making authority, the working group plays a central role in developing and presenting recommendations to the BOIE to ensure that the parliamentary perspective and requirements are consistently reflected in the LTVP and its projects.

Since the 2022 appearance of the working group before this committee, BOIE has approved recommendations related to the material handling strategy and the preferred tunnel alignments. In Centre Block and the Parliament Welcome Centre, the board approved the food service locations, including a new public cafe and the creation of new flexible workspaces for parliamentarians in the courtyard infill. The board also approved the seating approach for the chamber and the galleries, the configuration of the two-story lobbies, the number, location, and configuration of House officers suites and parliamentary office units, and the processes governing the treatment of art and artefacts. In 2024, decisions were also taken on accessibility improvements for the Memorial Chamber and Peace Tower, lobby layouts, multimedia enablement, circulation, and strategies for the rehabilitation of heritage spaces and the landscape design.

Most recently, in 2025, the board approved the long term vision and plan update. As part of that update, members were provided with an overview of the planning work under way for Block 2, which refers to the city block bounded by Wellington Street and Sparks Street, between Metcalfe and O'Connor Streets. Block 2 contains eleven buildings, nine of which are designated federal heritage structures, including the former U.S. Embassy at 100 Wellington, the Wellington Building Annex, the Central Building, the Metropolitan Life Building, the Gibson Building, the Hope Building, the Edwards Building, the Bate Building and the Postal Station B façade. The redevelopment of this block will provide parliamentary office units, while integrating and respecting the heritage character of the existing buildings.

In addition, the board endorsed the establishment of a dedicated indigenous cultural and ceremonial space in Centre Block and provided guidance on sustainability, cost optimization and several matters related to the Centre Block landscape and forecourt.

The working group remains committed to ensuring that decisions are grounded in parliamentary requirements, respect the heritage of this national institution and site, and meet the long-term needs of members.

With that overview, I will now turn to the chief information officer, Benoit Dicaire, responsible for real property services, who will describe the House administration's technical role in the LTVP and the projects.

[*English*]

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

I'm here today with my colleague Jeffrey LeBlanc, deputy clerk, procedure. We welcome the opportunity to speak to the House administration's role in supporting the long-term vision and plan and Centre Block rehabilitation.

A key part of our work is ensuring that the renewed Centre Block remains recognizable to Canadians while meeting the functional, technological, safety and security needs of modern Parliament. This includes supporting decisions on elements that members care deeply about, such as how the chamber will function and evolve over time, how the lobbies and galleries are designed, how heritage furniture is protected, what is being added or improved and how the building is future-proofed to accommodate growth and accessibility.

Our role is to ensure that the operational security, information technology, accommodation, accessibility and symbolic requirements of the House of Commons are fully incorporated into the project. We work with Public Services and Procurement Canada and all of the House of Commons service areas, engaging subject matter experts across the administration through ongoing consultation to support project planning activities and design reviews and technical assessments. This collaboration provides the working group and the board with the evidence-based information required to make informed decisions at each stage of the project and ensures that our recommendations are rooted in operational expertise.

The House administration's involvement touches every aspect of the parliamentary workplace in support of parliamentary opera-

tions. This includes the development and oversight requirements for the chamber, the galleries and lobbies, the caucus and committee rooms, the leadership suites and members' offices, and the heritage spaces, as well as the circulation networks, accessibility and the integration and conservation of art and artifacts.

We oversee the technical requirements for modern multimedia and interpretation systems, as well as security, food services, material handling, connectivity and all aspects of the accommodation of workspaces. We further support project dependencies and swing space planning, including the sequencing of work related to block 2 and the Confederation Building.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

As we look to 2026, the working group and the board will be concentrating on several priority elements of the LTVP and the Centre Block project. This includes further work on the chamber, with a particular focus on seating configurations and support for modern chamber operations.

The year ahead will also involve continued development of decorative arts and heritage integration. In addition, attention will be directed to the supporting programs associated with Block 2, such as tunnels, circulation considerations and campus-wide functional requirements to ensure that the redevelopment aligns with broader precinct needs and the long-term operational vision for Parliament. Each of these components is essential to ensuring the House of Commons will meet the modern operational needs of Parliament while protecting its historic character.

This project represents a significant and national opportunity to renew one of Canada's most important parliamentary institutions. The administration remains committed to providing Parliament with the analysis and technical advice it needs to make informed, responsible decisions.

I will now turn to our colleague, Jennifer Garrett, the assistant deputy minister from Public Services and Procurement Canada, who will speak to the project delivery elements under her department's responsibility.

Jennifer Garrett (Assistant Deputy Minister, Parliamentary Precinct, Public Services and Procurement Canada): Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

The parliamentary precinct is the heart of Canadian democracy, a source of pride for Canadians and an international landmark.

These beautiful heritage buildings are the core workplace of parliament and PSPC believes that it is essential for parliamentarians to be kept informed of, and more importantly, contribute to this modernization effort.

[English]

To this end, I have appreciated the close partnership we have had with the House of Commons administration to establish governance bodies, including the long-term vision and plan, the members of Parliament working group and the Board of Internal Economy. It is through these engagements and these governance bodies that we've been able to obtain key decisions in support of parliamentary requirements that are shaping the program.

The long-term vision and plan serves as the road map and guides precinct modernization. As Mr. Kmiec outlined in his opening remarks, many decisions have been taken in support of both the Centre Block rehabilitation and the broader LTVP program.

[Translation]

Before I provide a brief overview of key projects under way, I am pleased to advise that, in collaboration with the parliamentary administrations, PSPC has completed an update of the LTVP. Last updated in 2006, this new plan focuses on transforming the precinct into a secure, integrated parliamentary campus with the necessary infrastructure to support modern parliamentary operations while safeguarding the historic character of the precinct.

[English]

The work we are doing is more than construction; it's an investment in Canada. To date, approximately \$5.9 billion has been invested in modernization efforts across the precinct, creating over 89,000 jobs in support of Canada's industrial base. Major projects like the Centre Block rehabilitation and the block 2 redevelopment will continue to contribute to Canada's economic prosperity.

Now I'll move on to the Centre Block rehabilitation program.

• (1115)

[Translation]

At the core of this transformation is the rehabilitation of the Centre Block and the construction of Canada's new Parliament Welcome Centre. This project will modernize existing and provide new parliamentary capabilities, including a world-class visitor experience.

[English]

However, I would like to assure this committee that when Centre Block reopens, it will look very much as it did before. PSPC has pursued deliberate design approaches, like base isolation, that are preserving heritage spaces. Integrated design strategies have been developed for each of the almost 50 Pearson special heritage rooms. Finally, Centre Block's woodwork, heritage lighting, stained glass, frescoes and other heritage elements are being carefully restored and will be returned to their rightful places.

From a modernization and future-proofing perspective, the House of Commons chamber will be modified so that it can support the growth of the number of members of Parliament, in alignment with the Fair Representation Act. Heritage committee rooms and parliamentary offices will be upgraded, and the building will now feature additional functions, such as touchdown spaces for members who do not have offices in the building, meeting rooms and a family-friendly room.

[Translation]

With design development now complete, and as members witnessed at the tour this morning, reconstruction efforts are advancing rapidly. Approximately 17% of the structural work for the Parliament Welcome Centre is complete and 22% of Centre Block's structural rebuild is under way.

[English]

Finally, this project is being built by Canadians for Canada. To date, more than 400 companies have contributed, with 95% of them being Canadian businesses and with trades from seven provinces. The domestic share of steel for the project rests currently at 65%, including 100% for the reinforcement of the Peace Tower. I am pleased to report that efforts are under way to significantly increase Canadian steel content using innovative manufacturing solutions.

With regard to block 2 and campus connectivity, the other major project under way is the redevelopment of block 2, which will convert a collection of deteriorated buildings into modern, secure and accessible spaces, providing essential accommodations and support infrastructure for parliamentarians.

PSPC has also launched projects, in collaboration with the parliamentary administrations, that will provide secure underground tunnels that connect buildings to the north and south of Wellington Street, as well as a new material-handling facility.

[Translation]

In closing, PSPC remains committed to working in partnership with Parliament to provide a modern, secure and integrated precinct that meets the needs of parliamentary democracy and is a welcoming place for Canadians well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to your questions

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I was secretly hoping that the Deputy Speaker would go over time, but he's well under time. I was hoping to use that as a chit in the future, but it didn't happen.

We'll turn to Mr. Cooper from the Conservatives for six minutes, please.

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

It's my understanding that the timeline for completion is 2031, with the full opening scheduled for 2032. Is that still on track?

Jennifer Garrett: I am pleased to report that your data points are accurate. Our intention is to complete substantial construction in the 2031 time frame.

Based on previous lessons learned with other projects, our intent is to give approximately 12 years of commissioning to the parliamentary administration so they can fire up the systems in the building and make sure everything is working—

Tom Kmiec: It's months.

Jennifer Garrett: I apologize. It's 12 months to commission the building, with an opening of 2032.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, but the mics are very strong, so could you sit back. It's for our interpreters. You don't have to lean into it. Thank you.

• (1120)

Michael Cooper: Thank you for that.

I'll go to Ms. Garrett for my next question, which is with respect to the sourcing of material.

You said that 65% of the steel has been sourced from Canada. Where is the other 35% being sourced from?

Jennifer Garrett: Let me clarify the question, so I'll back up. At this point, 65% is Canadian. We have not bought all the steel for the job, so we're still continuing to buy steel in support of the design process that's now coming to completion.

Michael Cooper: You only—

Jennifer Garrett: I'm going to answer your question.

Some of the steel has been sourced from the U.S., and some of the steel has been sourced from further abroad, from Europe or even Asia.

At this point, I am happy to report that we've done some specific work with the steel industry, actually.

Am I still too close? I don't get this at my other committee appearances. Is this good?

The Chair: Your p's are popping into the mic. You're very clear and we can hear you. If you just sit normally, you're okay.

Jennifer Garrett: All right.

As to what we're doing right now, when the tariff situation arrived, we did some great work with our construction manager, which is a joint venture of PCL and EllisDon, as well as with the steel industry, including members of the Canadian manufacturing industry—

Michael Cooper: I appreciate that and I'll give you some time to elaborate on some of those points, but I just want to be clear that to date, 65% of the steel has been sourced from Canada. How much has been sourced from the U.S. to date?

Jennifer Garrett: At this point, for the project as it stands today, it's 45%, but that will move quite dramatically to close to 100%. It will be 100% Canadian-purchased and manufactured steel by the time we're done the project.

Michael Cooper: I'm sorry. Just so I'm hearing you correctly, to date, 45% of the steel has been sourced from the United States.

Jennifer Garrett: It's been sourced from other countries, including the U.S., and from Europe and Asia.

Michael Cooper: Okay. It follows, therefore, that we have seen the imposition of countertariffs on steel products that came into effect on March 13 of this year, I believe. What has been the impact of increased costs for sourcing steel in light of countertariff measures?

Jennifer Garrett: In full transparency, what we need to understand is that we're still in the process of buying steel for the job. The only steel you see is the steel we have on site and the steel we've done for our temporary reinforcement.

We are in the process of purchasing steel for the vast majority of the job, which is why we believe we're going to be very close to having 100% Canadian steel for this particular job by the time we're all done.

Michael Cooper: I appreciate that the move is towards Canadian, but there have been countertariffs imposed, and I'm just trying to get an understanding of what impact countertariff measures have had on overall costs.

Jennifer Garrett: Right now, as it relates to steel, we expect to pay premiums on steel, and we've been transparent about that publicly.

Michael Cooper: What would those premiums be?

Jennifer Garrett: Do I get to explain what they're associated with before I give you the numbers on it?

Michael Cooper: I'd like a number.

Jennifer Garrett: Okay. At this point, we're tracking around a \$6-million premium on a multi-billion dollar program. The rationale for this is that we're taking Canadian steel products and using innovation. This is a new manufacturing methodology that has been brought to light since we started this approach, investigating what we could do to Canadianize steel production. We're able to take Canadian product and weld it together using Canadian manufacturers, so the incremental cost is providing jobs for Canadians in incremental manufacturing capabilities in terms of welding steel capabilities together.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'll now turn to Madame Brière for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for giving us this tour, which was very interesting and fascinating.

Have you encountered any challenges that you could tell us about?

What challenges do you anticipate between now and the completion of the work?

• (1125)

[*English*]

Benoit Dicaire: Thank you for the question.

[Translation]

There are challenges at every stage of such a large-scale project. I can talk about the challenges related to the role of the House and the House administration. My colleague can talk about the challenges associated with construction, design and so on.

In the House, we must always strike a balance between several factors, such as security and openness, or heritage elements and functionality, particularly the lack of space needed to hold meetings or events in the building. With regard to space, there are many activities in any one building, and we have to prioritize what stays and what goes.

For example, the House currently has a beautiful interpretation booth. There was also an interpretation booth in Centre Block. We have one here in the interim House. However, in the new House, given the increase in the number of members, we unfortunately do not have the necessary space. We therefore have to transform certain elements. A television control room that was directly associated with the House of Commons now has to be moved out of the building.

We therefore have to innovate and transform in order to offer the same service in a safe and functional way, just in a different manner.

That is a specific example where transformation is necessary. We do not have the necessary space in the building, and we must ensure that priority is given to the primary needs of the building and space for members, rather than to the House administration, in a heritage building such as the Centre Block.

I think Ms. Garrett can give you other examples, particularly with regard to the challenges posed by construction work.

[English]

Jennifer Garrett: Given where we are in the program, I would concur with Mr. Dicaire. From a design perspective, the chamber is a very significant undertaking and design challenge for us, but we're making good strides.

Moving more to the project side, those of you who came to the site to visit us today saw that we were doing a lot of work in the basement to stabilize the building and add base isolation so we can excavate underneath and link the new Parliament welcome centre to Centre Block. That is probably one of the most technical undertakings in the world right now, from a structural perspective. The slab is going from this big to several feet—about a metre and half wide, I would say. While we're doing that, we have to dig to a three-millimetre tolerance for the building. We cannot shake the building as we're digging beneath it.

We will be very happy to complete that excavation process, get out of the basement and complete the structural reinforcement of the building.

[Translation]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: In terms of the environment, are there any energy efficiency targets that you would like to achieve?

[English]

Jennifer Garrett: Yes, we do. From a sustainability perspective, we have a comprehensive strategy. We're pursuing LEED gold and carbon neutrality for the building. That is driving us towards innovative strategies. We are connecting to the building network in terms of heat, moving from steam to hot water, which will help our effort. It is outside the project that we're making those connections. Within the project, there are things like closing in the courtyards and putting in state-of-the-art building infrastructure designed for future climate change requirements.

Those kinds of things, in addition to our geothermal net, are allowing us to dramatically improve the performance of the building and hopefully the comfort of parliamentarians.

[Translation]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: In terms of history and heritage, I imagine you are working with specialists. I do not have the exact titles, but could you tell us a little about their work?

Benoit Dicaire: There are two aspects to that question.

The entire heritage aspect is the responsibility of Ms. Garrett and her team, while the decorative arts aspect is the responsibility of the respective speakers of the House of Commons and the Senate, supported by the curator of the House of Commons and teams specializing in that area.

With regard to heritage items, Ms. Garrett can speak about her team and certain specialists who are part of her team.

• (1130)

[English]

Jennifer Garrett: For all of this, we have dedicated experts within PSPC and the contractor community on both the design and construction sides of the program. Our lead designer, Centris, is a joint venture of HOK and WSP, and on the construction management side, we have a joint venture of EllisDon and PCL.

From our perspective, we started with the design process. We did an extensive assessment of the heritage character of the building. We went right back to the archives. There is a comprehensive heritage brief that, first and foremost, outlined the elements of the building that were important and required protection, so we considered those as we launched the design.

We have various conservators on the construction side and informing on the design side, because we have our constructor on board. It's an integrated delivery model. Construction informs design, hopefully sharing lessons learned and avoiding costs as we go forward, because we're getting expert advice up front in the program rather than at the end of the design process.

We've done dedicated strategies for the 50 special Pearson rooms in the building. I can assure the committee that we have been able to modernize and put modern architecture and capabilities, which Mr. Dicaire is leading on, into these heritage rooms without unduly affecting their heritage character.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Chair, I have a really short question.

The Chair: You are way over time.

[*Translation*]

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

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much.

I want to echo what my colleagues have said. The tour was very much appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to plan the next steps.

My first question is for you, Mr. Kmiec, from the working group.

As we know, the parliamentarians who sit in Parliament today are not the ones who will be sitting in Parliament 50 years from now. So, there is a need for a long-term vision.

Demographics and the world are changing. For example, not so long ago, we did not have a voting app. Viviane Barbeau once told me that less than 30 years ago, there were not enough bathrooms for female MPs, and they would sometimes arrive late for votes. There are situations that we cannot yet foresee.

What support do you receive from outside groups or experts, for example, to help you plan for the future so that decisions made by parliamentarians who will no longer be there are still appropriate for future needs?

Tom Kmiec: Ms. Normandin, you said that in 50 years, today's MPs may no longer be sitting in Parliament. I would say that Mr. Plamondon is proof that no one can predict someone's political path. It is quite possible that some members will still be here in 50 years and will see the trajectory of the construction work and how the House is being used.

We are getting assistance from experts such as the clerks of the House of Commons and members of the department responsible for construction projects.

We rely on people who have been chairs of this subcommittee for much longer than I have. Several other MPs have been members of this working group. We are relying on those responsible for the construction to suggest people to contact for advice, which we included in the documents distributed to the committee.

Christine Normandin: I would like to hear your comments on the issue of tunnels connecting the north and south sides of Wellington Street.

At present, the meeting is public, so I understand that some information cannot be disclosed, but I would like to hear your comments on the security aspect in general.

It could be an improvement in terms of security if only MPs and employees were allowed to use the tunnels, for example. If someone manages to infiltrate, it could become problematic. I am thinking of the situation not so long ago when a convoy of truckers invaded Ottawa. If the ends are blocked, it could make things more dangerous.

How will security be guaranteed when the various buildings are connected by tunnels?

Benoit Dicaire: That's an excellent question. Unfortunately, there isn't much I can say in public, but I would be happy to answer your question.

That being said, what I can say is that the safety of MPs and parliamentarians is paramount in our long-term planning. Several measures are being taken to analyze emerging risks. The security environment has changed significantly between 2014 and today. We must continually adapt to new security realities and challenges, and we must seize new opportunities.

In this context, tunnels represent both a challenge and an opportunity. They are one of several elements that are part of an integrated security strategy for the parliamentary precinct.

When we talk about security, we are talking about a multi-layered approach. We must use the physical and digital resources at our disposal. We also have an operational workforce, namely the Parliamentary Protection Service team, which handles operational needs. We must work together to ensure an integrated approach to security.

• (1135)

Christine Normandin: I know that you have been in contact with representatives from several parliaments around the world to get an idea of best practices.

Which parliaments are similar to Canada's? There are some very modern parliaments that are like something out of this world. I know that the Speaker of the House recently visited Westminster. That is also very different, because it is quite old and cannot be expanded from the inside.

Which parliaments would be comparable to the Canadian Parliament?

Benoit Dicaire: I can speak about certain elements. We have a great partnership with PSPC in relation to what is happening elsewhere in the world.

Certain trends, such as the visitor experience, have changed dramatically. We are very much in line with modern parliaments on this point.

Parliaments in several countries are at different stages of their reconstruction projects. The visitor experience is one trend, tunnels are another. The security context is a third element of similarity, regardless of which parliaments we visit.

Ms. Garrett's team and I are part of a network that allows us to share lessons learned at different stages. We take comfort from that when speaking with one another. We observe very similar situations and challenges, and we are able to learn from them.

Ms. Garrett, would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

Jennifer Garrett: PSPC and the parliamentary administrations are part of an international network. It's interesting that many parliaments across the world are renovating their parliaments at the same time. It is an opportune time to share lessons learned. Interestingly enough, when we get together, we find ourselves very much having common problems and challenges, so the exchange is very rich.

In terms of heritage, even though Westminster is bigger, we're very similar to the U.K. Parliament in terms of its heritage and its challenges. It's also similar to Hungary.

When we talk about security, visitor experience and modern parliamentary functions, we have a lot of interest in aligning with the U.S. Capitol, but I would say that every parliament across the world we're involved with has something to provide us. There's a link somewhere with everything we're doing, and we do rich exchanges on a variety of topics.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Kram for five minutes, please.

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us today.

The provincial legislative building of Saskatchewan recently underwent a pretty major rehabilitation project, so I was a bit surprised to see on page 6 of the slide deck the infographic about buying Canadian, where it says that 95% of the 400 companies working on the project were representing just about every province except Saskatchewan.

I was wondering how that one fell through the cracks. What happened with the potential Saskatchewan suppliers? Why did they not make the grade, so to speak?

Jennifer Garrett: I'll take that question. Thank you for the opportunity.

I will say, do not despair. There is a lot of time left in this job. Our goal with this program is to have every province and territory represented in the project.

To date, we've bought out the job only as far as the structural side goes. I would have to go back to understand, through our construction manager, if we had any company from Saskatchewan that bid and did not make it through the bidding process. All of our processes are bid competitively through our construction manager.

There is a lot more work to come, and we're hoping that we can get the word out and have bidders and companies come from across the country to work on this important program.

• (1140)

Michael Kram: On that note, with the "65% Canadian-sourced" steel alluded to on page 6, I was wondering if the project has had any communications with Interpro Pipe and Steel of Regina. They're a major steel manufacturer in Saskatchewan.

If we are sourcing steel from the United States and paying tariffs on top of it, I'm sure there are many steelworkers in Regina who would be very appreciative of the opportunity to work on such an exciting project. Can anyone comment on whether those communications have taken place?

Jennifer Garrett: The company is not ringing a bell for me personally. I will go back and check, but on this particular program, we have had many engagements with the steel manufacturing industry. They could have been part of those engagements.

Let me take that back. We are happy to provide that answer. We're also happy to make any connections between these companies and our construction manager so they better understand their capabilities and are prepared to bid on our jobs.

Michael Kram: Very good. You'll be hearing from me, for sure.

I should clarify that I was not on the tour today, but I did do the tour a few weeks ago. It looks like a very exciting and fascinating project. I was particularly interested in some of the reinforcements being made to protect the structure from earthquakes and seismic activities.

I understand that in 2010, there was a significant earthquake in the Ottawa area that reached five on the Richter scale. I'm wondering how powerful an earthquake the structure will be able to withstand once the project is complete.

Could someone comment on that?

Jennifer Garrett: I can happily talk about the structural reinforcement, but given that there are structural elements to it, the actual number we're designing to I'd like to provide to the committee off-line because there's a security-related element to it.

Let me just say that, surprisingly, Ottawa is in the second-highest seismic zone in the country and code requirements are very strict. We've gone through a deliberate exercise. It was early days in the program when we decided that because of this iconic heritage building, we had a choice to make. Do we strengthen the building from the top so it can withstand shaking of that type of magnitude? Code identifies the magnitude of earthquake we're required to design to and what the building must be survivable to after that event. That's the information we can provide off-line to the meeting.

We went through a very deliberate exercise, and we chose a base isolation methodology. It's new to the Ottawa area, but it's not a new innovation. It's used on the west coast and in the Pacific Rim in the earthquake zones.

The reason we pursued this is that base isolation will absorb the shock. We don't have to stiffen the building as much above, so we are protecting the heritage spaces. If we had chosen to stiffen the building to withstand the shock, it would have created a catastrophic impact on the high heritage spaces in the building.

Michael Kram: Mr. Chair, do I have time for a quick question for Mr. Kmiec so you can cut him off? That might work well for—

The Chair: You have five seconds, which you're eating into.

Michael Kram: Mr. Kmiec, do you have any comments?

Tom Kmiec: Is it on the earthquake-proofing, Chair?

The Chair: Specifically, it's whether the seismic activity from question period will be withstood.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Tom Kmiec: As I tell the other chair occupants, we are merely victims of all of your behaviours.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We will now turn to Mr. Louis for five minutes, please.

Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you to all of you, not only for being here today, but also for the opportunity to tour Centre Block. It was the first time for me to see the construction. I think that was very meaningful.

It's a significant and historical opportunity to modernize Parliament. I believe one of you mentioned that it's an investment in Canada. We're talking about a modern, secure, accessible and integrated.... This is a chance to reinvent.

Off the top, you mentioned thousands of jobs and 400 companies across Canada.

Ms. Garrett, you already mentioned that a majority of the steel we're using is Canadian, and that was before the world changed. You'll be sourcing and prioritizing Canadian steel now.

Can you explain how companies can get involved? It seems like both a source of pride and a source of jobs.

• (1145)

Jennifer Garrett: Centre Block and the work we've done in the precinct have always had a Canadian focus. It's been largely delivered by Canadian labour, and we have focused on Canadian materials and capabilities whenever we can. In the new environment we find ourselves in, we're doubling down on that effort, which is why we're pursuing steel and what steel opportunities there are.

I'll be honest: This was a learning exercise for us. We phoned up the steel manufacturing industry and the steel production industry and had a conversation. I think I'm safe to say that if you ask them, they'll say they were very pleased to receive that call.

We've done several engagements with them. That's allowed them to understand our requirements and for us to understand their capa-

bilities. That's where we've come up with the idea...and we're briefing this more broadly than just the work we're doing in the precinct.

I'm sorry if I'm going too far into this. I'll share what I've learned. One of the capabilities we used to have in this country, which Canada has lost over the course of time, is the ability to produce seamless, wide flange steel. That's a big contributor to construction efforts. It's a capability that will take quite a bit of time and quite a bit of money to re-establish. That's a decision for the industry to make.

What we've been able to do in the meantime is determine that we can take Canadian-produced steel members and fabricate them into a wide flange unit. That, among other things, is how we got there. We got there by sharing our challenge and saying that we were interested in working with the industry to get there, fundamentally.

Tim Louis: I'm not sure who is best situated to answer this question. We got to go inside the building, right down to the basement, and looked around. Most people are only seeing things from the outside. What they see is a Parliament that looks relatively the same as it always has, except for some cranes.

Can someone explain what's about to happen to Centre Block's Peace Tower? It will be covered pretty soon. When will that happen, why is that happening and for how long? I ask so people who are walking past will know what's going on.

Jennifer Garrett: Just to situate this before I get to the steel—and I don't think you can see this from the Hill camera—if you venture up to the site and look through the side of the construction fence, you'll see that a very large hole, which is the future Parliament welcome centre, is filling in. We are now working on the second level, meaning we've already done the bottom level. We're actively pouring concrete on the second level. The hole is filling up.

Inside the building, we're actively working on structural reinforcements—people saw the rebar—and excavation underneath the building. That structural work is in hand throughout the building. On the exterior—because Parliament Hill is a major draw for visitors and a major economic driver for the tourism industry—we did a lot of work, before the project even stood up, to coordinate things like the changing of the guard, to make sure that could still happen, and putting lights on the building. You name it; we've done those engagements.

We deliberately started the masonry program, which is actively under way, on the rear parts of the building so that we maintained the front view of the facade for as long as possible. However, alas, we are at the point when we have to move the masonry program across the front facade and along the Peace Tower.

If you were looking through the Hill camera today, you would see on the east side of the building that scaffolding is starting to take shape. Over the course of the winter and spring, you're going to see that scaffolding come up across the front of the building, and that's so we can start the masonry rehabilitation along the front, do window restoration and replacement, etc.

Tim Louis: I have seconds left, but for all the children of all ages watching, how do we access this Hill camera?

Jennifer Garrett: Google "Parliament Hill cam" and it will come up. It's available on the PSPC website.

The Chair: Thank you so much. That was an example of an actual five-second question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for five minutes.

Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dicaire, you mentioned moving the interpreters and the control room. That was one of the questions I wanted to ask.

We know that the role of interpreters is to support the work of members of Parliament. As important as they are, they do not take up much space. I would like to hear your comments on the advantages and disadvantages of moving the interpreters and the control room, which I am less familiar with.

For example, when the remote interpretation program was set up, we had challenges with interpretation delays. Perhaps the interpreters had more difficulty, since they did not have direct access to what they were able to see before.

What considerations were behind the decision not to have on-site interpretation?

• (1150)

Benoit Dicaire: That's an excellent question.

We work in partnership with the translation bureau at every stage of developing the transformation of simultaneous interpretation. We did this during the pandemic, which led to remote interpretation, among other things. It was the first mandatory innovation based on the context we had to work with.

In the current context, it's really a question of space. The building's layout presents a certain challenge that is forcing us to move in this direction. Technology has developed enough that we can make this change while also offering a similar experience. We will potentially offer a better ergonomic environment for interpreters, a centralized environment with modern facilities that will meet the needs for the next 40 or 50 years.

It's a bit different for the control room. Right now, there is convergence in the industry. The industry used to be very traditional in terms of audiovisual technology and television. Now, there is real convergence in terms of technology. I am thinking about IP tech-

nology in particular, which is evolving. It is also a question of costs. This is a real opportunity to look at the economies of scale we can achieve so that we can offer the same level of quality.

A few years ago, we held committee meetings via audio. Now, all committee meetings are held via video. The quality of webcasting is increasingly approaching that of television production. Television production is more expensive and requires more staff. It's different in terms of technology, but thanks to technological advances, the quality is nearly the same.

We are moving in this direction to offer better services, while remaining mindful of resources and quality requirements.

Christine Normandin: I would like to hear your comments on the number of conference rooms and offices for MPs in the old version of the Parliament compared to the number planned for the new version.

What needs have changed between the old version of the Parliament and the new one?

Benoit Dicaire: Members' offices have been given priority in the Centre Block. We learned a lesson for this building, which is to give priority to the offices of parliamentarians and House officials in strategic locations close to the chamber and the most frequently used committee meeting rooms. We have made this a priority.

So, there are fewer offices reserved for the House administration. There are fewer potential activities, which is forcing us to do things differently. We have less space for control rooms, and we are installing more offices for members of Parliament. We had to compromise on that.

There are heritage spaces in the Centre Block, such as the Prime Minister's office, the Leader of the Opposition's office, and so on. These are places that will not undergo major changes, but updated codes mean changes in accessibility. A parliamentary office therefore takes up a little more space, but it is similar to what you have seen in the Wellington Building today or in the Valour Building, two buildings that have been updated in recent years. You will see similarities, but priority is being given to a greater number of offices for members and conference rooms.

There will also be areas where an MP does not necessarily have an office, but where they can go to work with other people. Some areas are shared with Senators in the new Centre Block, which allows parliamentarians to interact in specific areas without having to travel to an MP's or Senator's office.

Christine Normandin: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. Jackson, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Deputy Speaker, it's nice to see you. The tour this morning was a pleasure.

I mentioned to a few of you that I was an MLA in the Manitoba legislature. We have a renovation project on the foundations of our building going on as well, so it's quite interesting to compare doing foundation work along the Assiniboine River and the Red River in Manitoba with working on the rock and banks of the Ottawa River. They're very different projects with different problems.

My first question is about some of the heritage pieces you talked about. You said there are 50 Pearson rooms. Is that correct? Would you be able to table a list of what those 50 are? I'm very curious. I didn't realize that there were that many.

• (1155)

Benoit Dicaire: Yes, we can table that. We have that.

Grant Jackson: Thank you very much.

Regarding the upper floors, I know I asked a few of these questions already, but I just want to make sure they're on the record.

I had heard, as rumours go on Parliament Hill, that the upper floors of the building would perhaps end up reflecting more of the hallways of the West Block, as in drywall and painting and that type of thing in the hallways and offices. I'd just like a clear understanding of whether they're going to look similar. Is any part of the building going to look like the West Block, or will it all return to the solid stone walls it had in the past?

Jennifer Garrett: Let me assure you that the upper floors will look exactly as they did before the building closed.

I think it's important to point out to this committee that West Block and Centre Block were two different buildings at various start states before they completed their rehabilitation processes. West Block, unfortunately, had gone through an interim rehabilitation in the 1950s time frame that had gutted all of the heritage features in the interior of the building. That's why the interior of West Block looks very different from the interior of Centre Block.

We have carefully, for Centre Block, taken every stone off and tagged it. We know where they came from and we are putting them back into the building where they came from, so you should not be able to discern a difference in the upper floors between pre-closure and the building's reopening.

Grant Jackson: As a proud Manitoban, I'd be remiss not to ask about the status of all that stone and if you've had to source any new Tyndall stone from Manitoba, where it originally came from, to replace stuff that was beyond repair.

Jennifer Garrett: I am proud to say that a lot of the interior stone is Manitoba Tyndall stone. When we have to source it, we source it from Manitoba.

Grant Jackson: Very good.

In terms of the steel that's gone into the building, there have been a lot of questions about that. I think I asked one individual—I don't see him here—about the amount of steel that has gone into reinforcing the foundation of the building. It might have been around 200,000 metric tons of steel. It was an astronomical figure. I think

it would be important for the committee to have that information, if it could be provided.

Jennifer Garrett: We were able to get that answer for you offline. Unless I'm mistaken, and we'll clarify it if I have made a mistake, I believe it's 2,000 tonnes. That's going from memory from what I was told when we were walking the site.

Grant Jackson: In terms of the blank slates and the architectural pieces that Pearson intentionally left, is part of the program to have some of those carved before opening? What does that process look like?

In terms of where the country is now versus when the building was built, I want to make sure that, if there are different parts of the country reflected on a provincial level, Manitoba artists are certainly reflected as well as folks from other parts of the country, or that images of our province are just as much represented as other parts of the country. I'm curious about what the process of how those will be developed looks like.

Benoit Dicaire: Maybe I can take the first part of the question. The partnership with Jennifer will help on this one.

When it comes to decorative art, a specific governance has been established. It goes through the Speakers of the Senate and the House, in consultation with the MP working group. When there's a commissioning of art or when there's an alteration to existing decorative art, there's a consultation process. It goes all the way up for approval through the Speakers' offices. That's the governance aspect, just to lay the foundation.

Our work right now is on restoring. In partnership with Jennifer's team, the dominion sculptor, who is an employee of PSPC, is in charge of the rehabilitation of the heritage aspects that are tied to the decorative art program and tied to sculptures specifically. If there's an opportunity to introduce new art, working in collaboration with the executive branch and ourselves in parliamentary administration, the process of governance is invoked once we look at it. However, the main focus at this point in time in the governance has been the rehabilitation of the heritage aspects that are tied to the building.

Mobile decorative art, such as paintings, have been put into storage at Heritage right now for conservation, and they're being looked at from a rehabilitation perspective and with a restoration aspect. Curators are engaged. There's a curator who is an employee of the House of Commons and the Senate. At this point, they're engaged in those specific things.

So governance is established now. There's an opportunity, and it would be working in partnership, especially when it comes to carvings, with the team that Jennifer leads.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We'll now turn to Mr. Wilkinson for five minutes, please.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver—Capilano, Lib.): Thank you very much to the witnesses for coming.

I have just a comment to start. I'm glad to hear of the prioritization of Canadian steel. Obviously, at a time when the sector in Canada is under attack, it's important for us to be not only buying Canadian steel but also setting the example as the Government of Canada.

I have a question on procurement. It goes a bit to what Mr. Kram was asking about. Often, procurements that take place in Ottawa are visible for particularly companies in Ontario and Quebec. What have you done in terms of outreach to ensure that companies in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and other places in this country are aware?

Jennifer Garrett: First and foremost, all our procurements are done in the public domain. Similar to Government of Canada procurements, they are up on public platforms for people to see.

Our constructors, EllisDon and PCL, are buying the job for us based on the design packages that are being delivered to them. They are companies with a national footprint. We have asked them to shake trees across the country. We've had several engagements with them. They understand the intent. In fact, even as it relates to indigenous businesses, we pay PCL to have an adviser who connects on the indigenous front with indigenous communities in the Algonquin to try to make sure we are providing business to indigenous firms as well. We're making good progress on that front.

That's what we do right now. We keep very close track of which provinces and territories are and are not part of the program. We are always encouraging our constructors to make sure they have market intelligence for industries that are outside of what I will call the national capital region. I will say, though, in defence of our construction manager, that some companies outside of the national capital region make business decisions to not compete. There's not much we can do about that. Our job is to make sure that the procurements are transparent and that we are providing the information that lets them make business decisions to compete or not compete.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: There are only a few of us around this table who actually worked in Centre Block. One of the challenges of Centre Block was that it was not very accessible. What are we doing to ensure that the future Centre Block is going to be much more accessible?

Jennifer Garrett: This is part of the design and the work we're doing across the precinct, and it is something we're quite proud of.

First and foremost, let's talk about Canadians coming to see their Parliament in action. Prior to closure, neither the chamber itself for parliamentarians nor the public galleries were accessible. Once the building reopens—and I'll just remind the committee that a big portion of the landscape is part of this program and we've completed the design for that—any visitor to the Hill will be able to come from Wellington Street up through the new visitor welcome centre, be screened, and be able to access the chambers to see their Parliament in action.

We have completely designed the chamber so that.... I would say, just to step back, that one of the design principles for this program is a dignified welcome for all. This means that as much as possible and whenever possible, people with disabilities are able to have the same experience that others are. To that end, the chambers will be accessible, and committee rooms have been accessible.

We're actually working with Accessibility Standards Canada. We, in some cases, are going beyond code. We're piloting new technologies, such as invisible lifts. We're doing a pilot right now in East Block to test this technology. Essentially, it looks like a stair until it isn't, and then it turns into a lift. We're looking at those kinds of capabilities, as examples, to allow parliamentarians, MPs, to access the lobbies to the chamber, which they couldn't do before. Actually, we're looking at them for the ceremonial entry of Centre Block too.

We're not just looking at mobility. We look at the broad range of challenges. We work hand in hand with the parliamentary administrations. We're looking at hearing, sight and neurodiversity whenever we can. Sometimes those create tensions and challenges even among themselves. We're doing the very best we can, and I believe we're a leading edge on this work.

• (1205)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Do I have some time?

The Chair: No.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: What a nasty chair.

The Chair: Yes, I'm tough. That's good. I like to hear that from the Liberal side. It might give me some credibility.

Mr. Van Popta, you have five minutes, please.

Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here and sharing your important information with us. Thank you for the tour. It was very enlightening, and cold.

I have a question for the person who is responsible for the slides that were circulated to us. Okay, it's Ms. Garrett.

I started reading this yesterday, and I got hung up at the very first bullet point under "Long Term Vision and Plan". It says, "\$5.9 billion invested to-date, creating more than 89,000 jobs." That doesn't seem credible to me. I don't know if that's a typing mistake—"89,000 jobs"—particularly since today on the tour and again reiterated at this meeting we heard that there are 700 people working on site and that that's going to be doubled to 1,500. If we multiply that by 10, that's 15,000 person years, or whatever you call that. That's a long ways from 89,000.

Perhaps you can explain how you came to that number, or if it's confusing, maybe you can refine it or correct it.

Jennifer Garrett: It's not confusing. I stand by the number.

I think it's important, as context before I answer the question, to remind this committee that the long-term vision and plan has been in place for a couple of decades. Like, the long-term vision and plan started in 2001. It was last updated in 2006, and we've just recently gone through an update. This is a multidecade strategy to modernize Canada's parliamentary precinct, and we track those numbers from the capital investment. West Block, for example, is included in that number, and so is the rehabilitation of the Senate of Canada building.

For PSPC to calculate those numbers, we use a Department of Finance and an industry standard approach of 15,000 person years per billion. That's how we came up with that number.

We would happily provide the breakdown of the details to the committee. I would say that Centre Block itself, in terms of those calculations, which are accepted by finance and industry practice, will create another 70,000 person years in jobs.

Tako Van Popta: What is the total cost of the whole project from start to finish? Centre Block, I take it, is \$5.9 billion, but for the whole project, which is going to create 89,000 jobs, what is the total cost?

Jennifer Garrett: I don't have the total cost of the project. I can give you the numbers that have contributed to the 89,000 jobs to date, to provide the context.

As I indicated, this is a multidecade strategy. In the 2006 strategy, the rehabilitation of Centre Block and the Parliament welcome centre was the pinnacle project. Now, the 2025 long-term vision and plan update is all about a campus for the 50% of parliamentarians who will be on the south side of Wellington and about building physical infrastructure like tunnels, as well as material handling and other capital programs.

The reason I say I don't know the total cost is that we still won't be done when we get that infrastructure completed. We're at 11 buildings renovated to date. We will continue to add to that number, but as an example, the Confederation Building, which some of you may have offices in, is in desperate need of rehabilitation. It will not go under rehabilitation until the mid-2030s time frame. It is our next project in planning. I cannot provide an estimate for that because I don't know what its scope or cost is going to be at this time.

I am happy to provide a breakdown of the investments to date, what they contributed to and the jobs created. I'm not trying to get away from answering a question; it's just that it's a rolling program of work, and there will be more costs and projects to come before we're done this modernization program.

• (1210)

Tako Van Popta: If we could see those numbers, that would be very helpful for me, because I'm still having trouble getting from \$5.9 billion to 89,000 jobs. There's something else going on there.

I have a question relating to the briefing we got from the analyst—thank you very much for that. It talks about the governance for the long-term vision. I'm going to quote something from it. It states the scale of the project “is massive, and it is technically challenging. The most significant challenge, however, is the complex governance. The Legislative Branch is responsible for determining

project requirements (scope) and the Executive Branch, represented by the minister of Public Services and Procurement, is responsible for budget and schedule.”

Perhaps you can explain why that is the most significant challenge of the whole project. There are massive challenges—structural, engineering and architectural. Why is this the most significant challenge?

Benoit Dicaire: Thank you, Mr. Van Popta. It's an interesting question.

If you look at Parliament, it's a combination of multiple institutions. You have the Library of Parliament, you have the Senate, you have the House of Commons and you have the PPS. They share an operational responsibility and operate in the same buildings.

Public Works has the project authority, and the House administration has functional authority over House requirements. If you extrapolate that, the Senate administration looks at the functional requirements for the Senate and represents senators, the library represents the visitor experience, and PPS represents the operational security posture. You're trying to blend a bunch of requirements together. Add to that the consultation process and the governance that's been established, where parliamentarians have to be engaged on both the House of Commons side and the Senate side, and it creates a complexity that PSPC has to navigate to get to timely decisions.

It's an important element of governance, and I wouldn't want to understate it. Parliamentarians have to be engaged. A lesson learned from the 20 years of doing these projects is that the outcome is better when you are engaged. We're trying to strike the right balance among engaging, validating and ensuring that parliamentarians are part of these decisions, while at the same time offering timely decisions so we're limiting costs and protecting the integrity of those programs.

Jennifer, I think you could probably add to that.

The Chair: We're well over time, but thank you so much.

Madame Brière, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Dicaire, thank you for all your answers.

Will elements be added to recognize First Nations, or will there be specific locations for them to gather?

Benoit Dicaire: BOIE approved the creation of a ceremonies room. Territorial recognition was ratified by BOIE during its June meeting. There are therefore elements in place that aim to recognize First Nations within the building.

I don't know if there's anything to add, but that it is where we have landed.

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: What will happen to the current temporary chamber in the West Block?

Benoit Dicaire: That's an excellent question.

No decision have been made yet. That decision rests with the House of Commons administration. It will have to decide how it will reuse that space in the future.

• (1215)

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Some opposition members could be put in there.

Did you find a newspaper from the 1920s in the walls?

[*English*]

Jennifer Garrett: Yes, we were able to find papers of the day. I'm using the wrong term; I apologize for that. We found much fewer items behind the walls than we expected, like cigarette packages. We found orders of the day. Am I using the terminology correctly? We found very little.

The most impressive finding we've had to date was actually from the exterior of the building. Before we broke ground, we did extensive archaeological investigations and found many artifacts in the ground. We've featured those at Doors Open Ottawa when we've welcomed people to the site in the past.

The most interesting find was a pre-contact knife we found in disturbed soil on the east side of the building. We worked with the administrations and with the Algonquin to identify it. It's known as a *mòkomàn*. One of the decisions before Parliament right now is a request from the Algonquin to display the *mòkomàn* in Canada's new parliamentary welcome centre.

Tim Louis: It's quite inspiring to see members of Parliament with infants and small children. They're taking care of them at the same time as taking care of our nation and legislation. You mentioned being family-friendly as we move forward. That's quite a broad term. Can you expand on that and let us know what kinds of plans there are for it?

Benoit Dicaire: Mr. Louis, it's an important factor. Demographics have changed over time, and members of Parliament have requested these types of services and amenities. You've seen that we've tried to bring them along the way in West Block. In some cases, we've had lessons learned around that. We have to continue to listen to parliamentarians and try to accommodate how they balance family life with public life.

For these amenities, through extensive consultations with our teams and the caucuses and through engagement with the working group and the Board of Internal Economy, I think we're in a better place. For Centre Block, we have a dedicated family room that is programmed in the floor plate. It's going to be in proximity to the chamber, accessible and offering services that should meet the future needs of parliamentarians who are at the stage of their life where they have younger kids.

Tom Kmiec: I think the double-floor lobbies will also help those of us who bring our children to Parliament Hill occasionally. It will make it easier to have them on a different floor from where the

whips desks are, and it will make it easier to communicate with members and with the staff responsible for the leadership teams. To have a two-floor lobby for each side is actually a big bonus. Members will be able to temporarily bring their kids to the lobby, obviously with the whips' permissions, because the whips run those places. It will make it simpler for those of us who bring our children to Parliament Hill.

Tim Louis: That's wonderful. Thank you.

As I said, I appreciate that. That will make Parliament more accessible and make more people willing to put their name forward.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for five minutes.

Christine Normandin: Thank you. I may not use all of my time.

Ms. Garrett, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making the tour family friendly. We spoke about it during the visit and I mentioned how much I appreciated it.

We already discussed this during the tour, but for the benefit of the entire committee, I would like to hear your comments on project costs.

What surprises have come up along the way?

Are costs on track?

When there is a possibility of cost overruns, how are they offset? Are other changes made?

I'd like to have a general idea of the state of affairs.

[*English*]

Jennifer Garrett: We established the baseline budget at the end of the schematic design process in the 2021 time frame. A lot has happened to us since that time. We're suffering significant inflationary conditions that were not anticipated, but having said that, at this point the established budget for the program is in the \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion range, and we're trying very much to stay within that frame.

To that end, we just went through an exercise with the House of Commons to look at making sure we were establishing cost efficiencies for the program. Now that we've done the design development process, which just finished up this fall, what we'll be doing is actively costing the program. At each end of the design phase, we recost, and we'll have a better understanding next spring of where we stand vis-à-vis that budget.

We are at only \$1.4 billion spent of the \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion, so we're doing everything we can to stop costs from manifesting on the program.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: On that subject, have there been any changes in direction along the way, to reduce certain costs, let's say, or correct the course?

Even though it is relatively early in the fiscal year, could you tell us what changes have already been made?

[*English*]

Jennifer Garrett: There is a plethora of small changes we've made, like how we went from a platinum standard of waterproofing to a gold standard of waterproofing. Those are small buildings. When we look at the building, we always look at our program. What can we do on the base building side before we look at impacting the parliamentary program?

One of the cost pressures you'll see—this is in the public domain on the quarterly reports that are on our website—is that we're under a cost and schedule program with the challenges in the work we're doing in the basement. The excavation costs were increasing for us, so the logical thing for us to do was to stop the amount of excavation we were doing. We want to nip those costs in the bud. That's the work we did with the parliamentary administrations, which was recently approved by the Board of Internal Economy, whereby we reduced the amount of excavation.

It caused us to move some of the program around. For example, one thing that comes to mind is that the Charles Lynch room that was previously in Centre Block is now programmed for B2 of the Parliament welcome centre. Through the design process, it was always programmed to be there, because we can provide state-of-the-art broadcasting capabilities, but we relocated it within the design.

All fundamental parliamentary requirements have been met, but we've been able to reduce the amount of excavation and cost pressure for the program. That's, I would say, the biggest challenge we've been confronted with to date.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: Thank you, Ms. Garrett.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'd like to thank our witnesses.

This committee is adjourned.

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