

Ministre des Services publics
et de l'Approvisionnement
Receveur général du Canada



Minister of Public Services
and Procurement
Receiver General for Canada

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S5

March 30, 2023

The Honourable Bardish Chagger, P.C., M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Procedure and
House Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Chagger:

I am pleased to provide a government response to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' nineteenth report entitled *Protecting the Parliamentary Precinct: Responding to Evolving Risks*, presented on December 14, 2022.

I would like to thank you and the members of the Committee for your continued efforts and dedication to improving the security of the Parliamentary Precinct, while ensuring that it remains open and accessible to Canadians so that they can continue to engage directly with the democratic process, come together in celebration and in mourning, and voice their opinions on important matters of the day, including exercising their right to protest.

The Government appreciates the recommendations brought forward for ensuring that the Parliamentary Precinct is not only safe and secure, but also welcoming and accessible. The Government agrees that discussions should continue concerning the transfer of Wellington Street and Sparks Street to federal jurisdiction, the possible expansion of the operational security of Parliament Hill and the Parliamentary Precinct boundaries. It also agrees that this important work should be conducted through increased collaboration and partnership with Canada's Indigenous peoples (specifically the local Algonquin Anishinaabeg communities), the City of Ottawa and security partners.

The government response to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' report has also taken into consideration recommendations arising from the 2023 Public Order Emergency Commission Report. A recommendation was made within the latter report to continue consultations and discussions led by the federal government to study whether changes should be made to the division of responsibilities for policing and security in the National Capital Region. This recommendation is aligned with recommendations from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' report, as well as current efforts to define the future of Wellington Street.

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I would like to note that the enclosed government response indicates where the Committee's recommendations fall outside of, or partially outside of, the Government's accountabilities. In these instances, the Government has indicated the actions it is taking within its accountabilities and authorities, as well as its desire and openness to work with key partners such as Parliament and the City of Ottawa to address the Committee's recommendations.

I am committed to working collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that the Parliamentary Precinct is a safe, secure, open and accessible place that functions for residents, enhances access to Canada's Parliament, creates an improved visitor experience and supports vibrant business activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena Jaczek', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Helena Jaczek, M.D., P.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Services and Procurement

Enclosure

c.c.: The Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., M.P.
President of the King's Privy Council
and Minister of Emergency Preparedness

The Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino
Minister of Public Safety

Mr. Justin Vaive
Clerk
Standing Committee on Procedure and
House Affairs

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS' NINETEENTH REPORT, PROTECTING THE PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT: RESPONDING TO EVOLVING RISKS

Recommendations 1 (Part 1), and 3

That the government and its partners continue their current consultations and discussions with relevant stakeholders regarding the potential expansion of Parliament Hill onto Wellington and Sparks streets, along with the potential redevelopment of these streets;

That Wellington Street, from the War Memorial to Kent Street, be closed off to vehicular traffic, yet remain open to traffic related to parliamentary business, public tramways, pedestrian and other forms of active transportation. An important objective is to highlight and promote Parliament Hill and the entire parliamentary precinct as the seat of Canadian democracy which is open to all.

Government Response

The Government agrees with these recommendations and has, in collaboration with Parliament, established a governance structure to advance this work. The Government has taken a first concrete step in their implementation by launching discussions with the City of Ottawa to transfer portions of Wellington and Sparks Streets to the federal government. While a long-term plan is being developed, the federal government is committed to working with the City of Ottawa to implement short-term improvements, and to engage with key partners, including Indigenous communities, business owners, and residents in shaping the future of the Parliamentary Precinct in the Nation's Capital.

The Parliamentary Precinct is a central feature in our nation's capital. Its safety and security are critical to the operations of Canada's democratic institutions. It must also remain a place for all Canadians to enjoy and feel welcome. The ongoing restoration and modernization of the Parliamentary Precinct, as well as considerations following last year's "Freedom Convoy" protests, requires an integrated plan to guide future development and to set a clear decision-making framework. Wellington Street runs directly through the parliamentary campus. Currently, approximately 40% of parliamentarians have offices on the south side of Wellington Street, including the Office of the Prime Minister, and that will increase to approximately 50% within a decade.

Understanding the traffic impacts for local residents, commuters and businesses of potential long-term vehicle restrictions on Wellington Street is critical to supporting the decision-making process, particularly as more public servants have returned to the work place. The Government of Canada is funding a transportation impact study launched by the City of Ottawa that will provide detailed analysis on the current closures on a priority basis in spring 2023. Analysis on potential expanded closure areas west to Kent Street and east to the War Memorial will be completed by the end of 2023.

Many world capitals have pedestrianized roadways similar to Wellington Street. International examples illustrate that this shift not only improves security, but also creates spaces that attract visitors, benefit residents, and are good for local business. Government is presently exploring these international examples and how best practices could be applied in a Canadian context, to ensure that the Parliamentary Precinct is both secure, open and accessible. There is also an opportunity to look at how planned municipal transportation projects could be integrated in a reimagined space, such as City of Ottawa cycling infrastructure and the Société de transport de l'Outaouais tramway.

In developing long term plans for Wellington Street, as well as Sparks Street, the Government of Canada, working in collaboration with Parliament and the City of Ottawa, will engage with Indigenous partners, residents and key stakeholders to ensure that plans are anchored in a strong and inspiring vision.

Recommendation 1 – Parts 2 and 4

That the relevant Indigenous groups, including the Algonquin Peoples of Ontario, be included as partners to the government in the consultations and discussions about the potential use and redevelopment of Wellington and Sparks streets;

And that, should Wellington and Sparks streets be redeveloped, the government must respect the traditions of the relevant Indigenous groups while carrying out the redevelopment work, including respecting any Indigenous artefacts that are found.

Government Response

The Government agrees with these recommendations and is committed to working with Indigenous Peoples and integrating Indigenous perspectives to ensure that the Parliamentary Precinct is welcoming and representative of Indigenous Peoples.

The Government has been collaborating with Indigenous communities on an increasing number of projects in the Parliamentary Precinct in support of reconciliation, representation of indigenous history and culture in the Precinct, and opportunities for economic development.

As announced by the Prime Minister in 2017, an Indigenous Peoples' Space is being established at 100 Wellington in the heart of the Parliamentary Precinct, directly across from Parliament Hill, to reflect the vision of Indigenous Peoples and the spirit of reconciliation. This is a national space for Indigenous Peoples, to be developed and governed by Indigenous Peoples. The Precinct being located on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg Nation, a dedicated space for the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation will also be developed in the heart of the Precinct.

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is essential, not just in the Indigenous Peoples' Space but throughout the restoration and modernization of the Parliamentary Precinct, and the

Government of Canada has made engagement with Indigenous Peoples a priority. Visioning sessions have been planned and hosted for projects such as the rehabilitation of Centre Block and the new Parliament Welcome Centre. This collaboration has been crucial to ensuring that the rehabilitated Centre Block and new Parliament Welcome Centre reflects Indigenous culture and is inviting for all Canadians.

Building on this collaboration and as the governance for the Indigenous Peoples' Space and the dedicated space for the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation is established by the National Indigenous Organizations and the Algonquin Anishinaabeg Nation Tribal Council respectively, the Government will work with Indigenous Partners to ensure access and all other requirements are fully integrated as part of plans for the on-going rehabilitation of the Parliamentary Precinct, including the potential transfer and future redevelopment of Wellington and Sparks Streets. As Indigenous Peoples visit the Precinct, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of continued access, not only to key Indigenous sites, such as the Indigenous Peoples' Space and dedicated Algonquin Space, but also throughout the Precinct itself.

Recommendation 1 – Part 3

That the Parliamentary Protective Service ensure that the potential expansion of the Parliament Hill onto Wellington and Sparks streets does not impose restrictions on the mobility and access of the Algonquin Peoples of Ontario to the Akikodjiwan and Akikpautik sites, also known as the Chaudière Islands, as well as to the promised Indigenous People's space at 100 Wellington Street, given that Parliament Hill and the parliamentary precinct are located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Peoples;

Government Response

This recommendation falls outside the accountabilities of the Government. The Parliamentary Protective Service, under the responsibility of the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons, is responsible for security within the Parliamentary Precinct and is best positioned to respond to this recommendation. The Government is committed to working with the Parliamentary Protective Service to ensure that access to the Precinct by Indigenous Peoples is not impeded, nor will it impede access to the Akikodjiwan and Akikpautik sites.

Recommendation 2

That the federal jurisdiction for the operational security of Parliament Hill be expanded to include sections of Wellington and Sparks streets and, if necessary, that a transfer of land take place between the City of Ottawa and Public Services and Procurement to allow for Wellington Street and Sparks Street to become part of Parliament Hill.

Government Response

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The transfer of custody would help address longstanding security issues and mandate gaps in the Precinct, as observed in both the Standing

Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' 2022 report, as well as the 2023 Public Order Emergency Commission Report. Therefore, the Government has entered into discussions with the City of Ottawa to transfer portions of Wellington and Sparks Streets to federal jurisdiction.

With Parliamentary operations now extending beyond the traditional boundaries of Parliament Hill, streets such as Wellington and Sparks run through the Precinct, rather than border it. The federal government is responsible for the buildings and lands that form the Parliamentary Precinct, but the City of Ottawa's ownership of the streets that run through it presents an important jurisdictional barrier that complicates the management of security and undermines efficient decision-making. Transferring custody of these key roadways to the federal government would simplify all aspects of operations and provide a clear framework to ensure a safe and secure, as well as open and welcoming Precinct. A transfer of custody would also enable the federal government, in collaboration with Parliament and the City of Ottawa, to implement a layered security approach that would both enhance security, but also enable Parliament to remain open and accessible to residents and visitors.

While this recommendation does not fall fully within federal authorities, the Government is committed to working with Parliament, and the City of Ottawa, to consider options and develop clear recommendations to improve the operational security of Parliament and its environs.

Recommendations 4 and 5

That the Parliamentary Protective Service pursue discussions with the appropriate jurisdictions to allow for monitoring of Parliament Hill and with the city and provinces to achieve this, and work collaboratively amongst all security levels to ensure that roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols are clearly defined to ensure a streamlined incidence response; and

That in recognition of a constantly evolving threat environment, Parliament Hill and the parliamentary precinct require increasingly sophisticated protections, and as such the Parliamentary Protective Service should be provided the necessary resources to secure the Hill and precinct, including but not limited to human resources, material and technological assets.

Government Response

As these recommendations fall outside the accountabilities of the Government, the Government defers responses to the Parliamentary Protective Service. The Parliamentary Protective Service, under the responsibility of the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons, is responsible for security within the Parliamentary Precinct.

Recommendation 6

That the Parliament of Canada must be a safe and secure institution which remains open and accessible to the public, including those seeking to express peaceful disagreement and discontent with decision makers, and, to this end, the Committee believes that striking the

correct and appropriate balance between these interests should be the responsibility of security and policing professionals subject, as in all matters, to parliamentary oversight and accountability.

Government Response

The Government agrees with this recommendation, although the recommendation falls partially outside its accountabilities on areas that relate to security and policing organizations, namely the Ottawa Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Parliamentary Protective Service. Parliament's safety and security are critical to the operations of Canada's democratic institutions, and to Canadians ability to engage directly with the democratic process, come together in acts of celebration and mourning, and to voice their opinions on important matters of the day, including exercising their right to protest.

The Government agrees that peaceful and lawful protest are an essential feature of Canadian democracy. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fundamental freedoms protected by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. Section 1 of the Charter effects a balance between the rights of the individual and the interests of society by permitting limits to be placed on guaranteed rights and freedoms. Consistent with this, and recognizing the independence of Parliament, the Government will, within its mandate and authorities, work with Parliament to attain a balance between implementing robust security measures and maintaining access to the grounds of Parliament for legitimate and lawful purposes, subject to parliamentary oversight and accountability.

Recommendation 7 (All Parts)

That the government and its partners create a working group on which the main security officials around and inside the parliamentary perimeter (PPS, OPS, RCMP, OPP) sit, to establish an effective and consistent plan in the event of incidents on Parliament Hill;

That these partners continue to meet regularly – at least twice a year – in order to constantly refine this plan and to allow, above all, to establish and maintain communication between the various security bodies, with respect to perimeter security of Parliament;

That this working group begin by doing a real post-mortem of the various incidents that have taken place on Parliament Hill over the past twenty years, in order to draw real lessons and improve the action plan; and

That this working group also meet as needed, when one of the members of the group wishes to report a problem or an incident that could affect the security of parliamentarians and staff.

Government Response

The Government agrees with this recommendation, although the recommendation falls

partially outside its accountabilities on areas that relate to the work of the Ottawa Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Parliamentary Protective Service. The Government supports the creation of a working group of security and policing partners to establish an effective and consistent plan to address incidents within a clearly defined Parliamentary Precinct. The Government recognizes the importance of effective planning, exercising, collaboration and communication to ensure clear roles and responsibilities, and coherent interoperability between partners. These elements are especially important due to the multi-jurisdictional nature of protection, security and policing in the context of the Parliamentary Precinct. The Government will, within its mandate and authorities, collaborate with the Ottawa Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Parliamentary Protective Service. A number of activities have already taken place to support this recommendation. In 2022, a Future of Wellington Street governance structure was established, in partnership with Parliament. As part of this effort, a Security Working Group was established that is bringing together all the agencies with a security or policing mandate in and around Parliament Hill. This Security Working Group could serve as a model to build upon in responding to this recommendation.

On February 17, 2023, Commissioner Paul Rouleau tabled the final report of the Public Order Emergency Commission in the House of Commons and the Senate. The report looks at the February 2022 events and the use of the *Emergencies Act* by the federal government in response to the occupation of downtown Ottawa, centered on Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill, and the blockades of key border crossings at Windsor, Ontario and Coutts, Alberta. As part of this report, a recommendation was made to continue consultations and discussions led by the Federal government to study whether changes should be made to the division of responsibilities for policing and security in the National Capital Region. This recommendation is aligned with current efforts to define the Future of Wellington Street, and the government response takes the Public Order Emergency Commission report into consideration. The Government has committed to providing a response to the Public Order Emergency Commission's recommendation within 12 months.

All considerations for the security and policing of the Parliamentary Precinct are being examined in a collaborative effort with partners across the multiple jurisdictions involved: federal, parliamentary, provincial, and municipal to ensure a safe, secure, and open Parliamentary Precinct.

Recommendation 8

That the government, in collaboration with the various law enforcement and security agencies, establish clear instructions regarding the mandate of each of these partners according to the types of incident, taking into account the expansion of the “effective perimeter” of Parliament Hill following the various works being undertaken in the buildings on the Hill; and that the government inform parliamentarians as quickly as possible.

Government Response

The Government agrees with this recommendation, although the recommendation falls

partially outside its accountabilities as it involves various law enforcement and security agencies outside the federal Government, specifically the Ottawa Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Parliamentary Protective Service. The Government agrees to work with security and policing agencies to clarify and codify the mandates, roles and responsibilities, and governance, of all the agencies involved in ensuring that the Parliamentary Precinct is safe and secure. Work has already been launched in this area. A Security Working Group, involving federal, parliamentary, provincial, and municipal security and policing agencies has been established under the Future of Wellington Street governance with a mandate to develop options to clarify roles and responsibilities and mandates of the agencies with a security or policing mandate in and around Parliament Hill.

Acting within its accountabilities, the Government will work in collaboration with all agencies responsible for policing and providing security within and outside the Parliamentary Precinct to establish clear guidelines for outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties in the context of various security incidents. The Government will also work with Parliament to ensure this information is communicated to parliamentarians effectively.