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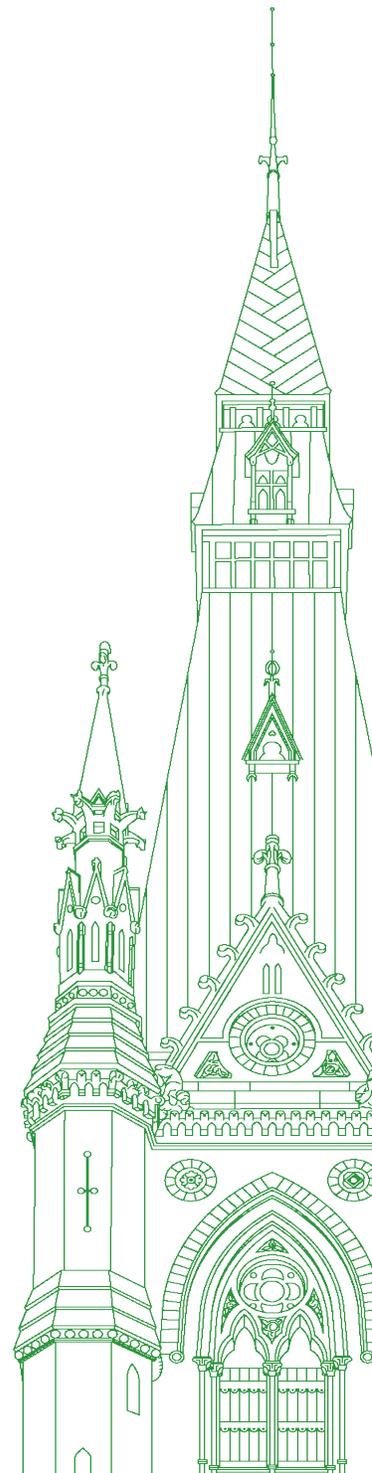
Board of Internal Economy

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Thursday, June 23, 2022



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• (1110)

[*English*]

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): Welcome to the 12th meeting of the Board of Internal Economy of the 44th legislature.

We'll start off with the minutes of the previous meeting. Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Brassard, you have the floor.

Mr. John Brassard (House Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When I took over as opposition House leader, I made a commitment to my staff that I would read through the Standing Orders. I'm sad to say that I'm only halfway through, Mr. Chair.

It says in the minutes that, concerning the report to Canadians, it would be tabled in accordance with the Standing Orders. I did a search, and I couldn't find which standing order requires it. I would like clarification from the clerk as to which standing order that is.

Mr. Eric Janse (Deputy Clerk, Procedure, House of Commons): It must be a mistake in the minutes. It's not the report to Canadians that's required to be tabled via the Standing Orders; it's the report on committees, the liaison committee report.

Mr. John Brassard: Perhaps that needs to be clarified, then.

Hon. Anthony Rota: That's clarified.

Mr. John Brassard: Yes, thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any other comments on the minutes of the previous meeting?

[*Translation*]

Since no one has any questions or comments, let us move on to the second item, business arising from the previous meeting.

[*English*]

Is there anything that we want to bring up?

[*Translation*]

Everything is clear? Perfect.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to number three.

[*Translation*]

The third item is the LTVP working group.

[*English*]

The presenters this morning will be Mr. Chris d'Entremont, who is the chair of the working group on the LTVP and the Centre Block rehabilitation; Mr. Rob Wright, assistant deputy minister, science and parliamentary infrastructure branch, Public Services and Procurement Canada; and Darrell de Grandmont, director of the Centre Block program.

Who will be presenting?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (Chair, Working Group on the LTVP and the Centre Block Rehabilitation, House of Commons): I will be presenting.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Anthony Rota: Okay.

Mr. d'Entremont, you have the floor.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

It's great to see everyone. I was starting to think that I was the jinxed presentation that keeps us from doing our work, and I thought I'd maybe have to come back in September to do this, so it's great to be able to present.

As chair of the House of Commons long-term vision and plan working group, I am here to update the board on our recent activities, including some items brought for our joint meeting with the Senate's LTVP subcommittee.

At our joint meeting with the Senate on May 28, 2021, we reviewed the food services proposed for the Centre Block and the in-fill options proposed for the central courtyard. We reconvened on March 25, 2022, to discuss underground network connections. Most recently, on May 6, 2022, the House of Commons LTVP working group received an update from former parliamentarian Bruce Stanton, chair of the block 2 design competition, and an update on the proposed public café in the Parliament welcome centre. Then again on Friday, we were able to have a discussion on a number of items. I will finish off my discussion with that.

I will brief you on these in a little more detail to seek endorsement of the board on recommended direction.

First I'll start with the Centre Block food services.

[*Translation*]

At the joint meeting, the House of Commons Administration presented an overview of the proposed range of food services to be offered in the Centre Block and the Parliament Welcome Centre. It also indicated their proposed locations.

The five types of food service identified for the Centre Block and the Parliament Welcome Centre are: the parliamentary dining room, which will return to its historical location on level six of the Centre Block; a cafeteria, located on the B2 level of the PWC; a public café, located on the B1 level of the PWC; parliamentary venue service to be located in the lobbies, committee rooms, speaker's suites, the proposed lounges on the Level 6, and so forth; and vending machines, with a minimum of one per building.

The House of Commons Administration was asked to answer a number of questions. In particular, it was asked for more detailed information on the rationale behind the proposed seating capacity of 50 at the new public café. It was also asked to ensure that the café is centrally located and easily accessible within the PWC for members of the public.

[*English*]

I believe the map or the drawing is in front of you.

The House administration returned to the LTVP working group last month, on May 6, with an update. The public café is now more centrally located near the entry hall of the PWC and includes an increased and flexible seating capacity of 89 seats. The working group concluded that this aligns favourably with international parliamentary trends and would be a welcome service addition to the facility and its users. The working group is satisfied with the proposal.

As you come in through the security section, the café will be sitting off to the right-hand side. Those folks who don't want to bring coffee inside or who are waiting for a tour can hang off to the side and grab a coffee or a quick sandwich if they need to.

The working group is recommending approval by the board for the proposed locations of the food services in the Centre Block and the parliamentary welcome centre, including the new public café capacity.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

I will now turn to the central courtyard infill options.

At the joint meeting, the Senate and House of Commons administrations presented three options for allocating space on levels four and five between the Senate and the House of Commons. These options pertained to the central courtyard infill levels above the Hall of Honour. The space on the sixth floor was proposed as a shared parliamentary lounge, which was endorsed by the House of Commons LTVP working group and the Senate's LTVP subcommittee.

Three options were proposed for the new space in the infill on levels four and five. Both the working group and the Senate LTVP subcommittee felt that further discussion on the proposed options

for the fourth and fifth floor infills is required to achieve consensus. We will return to the board with a recommendation once that has progressed.

[*English*]

Third, we have the underground network connections.

At the March 25, 2022 joint meeting, PSPC and the House of Commons administration presented a high-level overview of a network of underground connections that will ensure safe and efficient movement of accredited people and goods to support operations in the precinct.

The objective is to link the parliamentary buildings, including parliamentary office units, or POU's, and committee rooms in the blocks on the south side of Wellington Street. This would then include the introduction of underground tunnels to connect across under Wellington Street from north to south. A tunnel network will have multiple elements; efficient operations for the business of Parliament; access/egress redundancy; and linking buildings to the chamber. Security for parliamentarians is important, and assessing strategic entry connection points will be a key consideration.

Five tunnel options were presented. All options ran north-south in connecting building blocks south of Wellington to the parliamentary triad north of Wellington. The joint working group supported the concept of a multi-use, single-level secure tunnel system to be shared by all partners. The tunnels should be as direct as possible from POU's to both chambers, minimizing level changes, corridors, complicated circulation paths and the number of elevators and staircases.

Based on the operational information and advice received from the Senate and House of Commons administrations and PSPC, complete with an options analysis summary, the Senate LTVP subcommittee and the House of Commons LTVP working group agreed to recommend for approval to our respective boards the tunnel connections "W" and "D", which create a "loop", as the north-south alignment, which would be part of the overall material handling and underground network concept. I think the map is up there. As you can see for the "W" and "D", it makes a big circle around the precinct so that you can get in and out.

Finally, we have block 2 and the architectural design competition.

With Centre Block, the renewal of block 2 is a critical piece of Public Works and Procurement Canada's long-term vision and plan for the parliamentary precinct. Following the last update on block 2 to the BOIE in May 2021, stage 1 of the architectural design competition was finalized in September 2021, with a short list of six proposals recommended to proceed to stage 2.

The six short-listed competitors submitted their proposals to PSPC in March of this year. On April 11, 2022, the teams presented their design concept to the public online. As you may recall, my predecessor, Bruce Stanton, along with Senator Robert Black and MP Anthony Housefather, was delegated to represent the parliamentary portion on the jury for stage 2. The jury met over a three-day period—April 20, 21 and 22—to review the submissions and recommended the winner as well as the second- and third-place finalists, so if one doesn't work, you can always go to the second and then to the third if that's possible.

On May 16, Zeidler Architecture Inc. in Toronto, in association with David Chipperfield Architects of London, U.K., was named the winner of the architectural design competition for block 2. NEUF Architects here in Ottawa, in a joint venture with Renzo Piano Building Workshop from Paris, is the second-place finalist in the architectural design competition for block 2. Watson MacEwen Teramura Architects here in Ottawa, in a joint venture with Behnisch Architekten in Boston, is the third-place finalist in the architectural design competition for block 2.

The next steps for the block 2 project have started, with Public Works working on the contract with the winning team with the aim of onboarding them in the fall of 2022—this fall—and into the spring of 2023. The goal is to start construction on block 2 approximately 24 months from the signing of the contract with the winning team. In parallel, Public Works will continue to work with representatives of the House of Commons and parliamentary partners on a more developed building and functional program. The working group will return to the board with updates and seek the endorsement of the House of Commons when it's appropriate.

Lastly, the working group met late last week for discussions on the strategy proposed for the parliamentary office units, POUs, for Centre Block. We have a fairly good understanding of the strategy and will come back to brief the board and make a recommendation as the design progresses with more detail. There was also a presentation by PSPC on their efforts on indigenous engagement with respect to the Centre Block and in the wider context of the LTVP. We feel that PSPC has approached this thoughtfully and it will have a more important contribution that will continue to evolve throughout the implementation.

We hope to come back to BOIE with any details that you may be interested in.

• (1120)

Thank you. I'm happy to take the questions or share the questions with my partner in crime here, Rob Wright, or maybe with Michel, depending on what the questions may be on our proposal. There are a couple of recommendations in here that we need approval on.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

Are there any questions or comments?

We'll start with Mr. Julian and then go over to Mr. Brassard.

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the New Democratic Party): Thank you to the LTVP working group. I know what an incredible amount of work this is, having been briefly involved before

you passed on the torch. Our big thanks for all of the work that you've done, that you're doing and that you will do in the future.

I am particularly interested in the tunnel options. When any of us visit other Parliaments—the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament—all of them, within their parliamentary, legislative or capital precinct, have a tunnel network. It's for simple reasons. It's a question of effectiveness and efficiency.

We have the coldest national capital on earth. What happens in winter time, and what certainly has happened since I've been on the Hill—particularly when you have visitors—is that you go through this process of getting your coat, hat and everything else on, leaving your office building, going across the street, taking everything out, going through another security screen and finally getting into the area where you're actually going.

Sometimes, if there are committee hearings, that can be multiplied many times during the course of a day. It has never been efficient, to my mind. People are dressing and undressing—taking off coats, mitts and everything else—many times a day, and it seems to me that having a tunnel network will make a big difference in terms of making us more efficient so we can spend more of the time that matters helping our constituents and being engaged in the national debates that are so important.

When I look at the tunnel plan, I understand the recommendation is “W” and “D” to form that circuit that would go East Block, Centre Block, West Block and then through to Wellington and through to block 2 and block 1. I think that is, practically speaking, an excellent catch-up for Canada's national capital being on par with other world capitals in allowing people to move from one building to the next.

I have two questions.

Are there any provisions in terms of the tunnels—or has that discussion happened yet—around security screening from one to the next? When we're taking visitors through, for example, this is something that will save an enormous amount of time, but I would be interested in knowing what security screening, if any, is contemplated.

Second, we have two office blocks, the Confederation Building and the Justice Building, that have 10 feet between the two of them and then it's only about 100 feet from the Confederation block to Wellington, but I don't see provision for a tunnel network that would join them. It seems to me that's a relatively easy thing to do because of the short distances involved, but it would also add to the efficiency—if we have dozens of office suites in those two buildings—to allow members of Parliament and their visitors to move seamlessly through the West Block to the Centre Block.

Is that contemplated? I see a material handling node, but is there a possibility of extending the tunnel network to incorporate those last two buildings as well?

Thank you for your work.

• (1125)

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: First of all, I'll start off by saying that this is an elephant of a project. We have to take it on one bite at a time. We can only go so far.

It is contemplated to continue to the other two buildings, which are of course Confederation and Justice, but again, we need to get a few things built first and that's why the "W" and the "D" are first on our proposal.

Maybe I'll let Rob take on the security screening side of it. Just to that last point, it is contemplated but I just don't know where it will fit in the time frame.

Mr. Rob Wright (Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada): Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair.

To the point about security—and we'll be working very closely with the security partners on this—the concept is that it would be credentialed individuals who would be able to move through the tunnel. That would involve some type of system of secure access to the tunnels. Those details, which are very important, have not been worked out yet, but that is exactly the plan.

To the Deputy Speaker's point on the question of a connection to Confed/Justice, that is the plan. This loop concept and tunnel W could provide the opportunity to have a direct contact into tunnel W from Confed/Justice. That's one of the benefits of that, as well as its making use of already built infrastructure that we had as part of the West Block and the visitor welcome centre phase one.

The other option you mentioned.... Connecting to the Wellington Street tunnel and then making your way from there is another option. We'll be going through that option assessment. It would probably make sense for that to be a secondary step that we would do in conjunction with the rehabilitation of the Confederation Building.

Those decisions haven't been taken at this point.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: There's also a huge cost factor that goes with this. I've forgotten what the estimate was. This tunnelling under Wellington Street and to the side is not a cheap endeavour, by any stretch.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

Mr. Julian, are you all done? Okay.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Brassard, followed by Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. John Brassard: Let's talk about that.

Obviously, there's something in the ballpark that you can estimate the cost as being. Do we have any idea of what the estimate for the cost of the tunnelling network could be?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair.

There is a distinction between the blue and the pink tunnels. There's a portion of the tunnel infrastructure that was already designed and constructed as part of the West Block and visitor welcome centre phase one. We're making use of that portion by reusing it.

The Parliament welcome centre that we're building in conjunction with the Centre Block will form the rest of that northern horizontal part of the tunnel. The Parliament welcome centre will serve.... There won't be any additional tunnel network there. That whole northern spine will be in place at no additional cost.

Mr. John Brassard: It's the north-south tunnel.

Mr. Rob Wright: It's the north-south tunnel. We have an order of magnitude construction-only cost for those north-south tunnels. The combination of W and D would give you an order of magnitude construction-only cost of about \$185 million.

What is not included in that—and this is important, because those are construction-only.... There are no design costs. There are no contingency costs. There are no risk costs and no escalation costs. That is the construction-only cost, which is one very important component, and the cost builds up from there.

That's the order of magnitude construction cost for those north-south tunnels.

Mr. John Brassard: I assume, Mr. Wright, that at \$185 million, we can pretty much ballpark from a percentage standpoint what those additional costs may be, such as the design costs, the contingency costs, the escalation costs and all that stuff.

Typically, what percentage of the construction costs would be factored into some of those other costs, so that we can end up at that ballpark end number of what these tunnelling systems will cost?

• (1130)

Mr. Rob Wright: That varies a bit project by project, but you can say that those ballpark construction costs will end up being around 40% to 50% of the overall project cost.

Mr. John Brassard: We could legitimately be looking at roughly a \$250-million project for these tunnelling costs, if I understand you correctly.

Mr. Rob Wright: Again, we have to do the due diligence here.

Mr. John Brassard: It's ballpark. I understand. It's a quarter of a billion dollars.

Mr. Rob Wright: It's a significant investment. There's no question about that, sir.

Mr. John Brassard: A nice winter coat costs \$199, so there's a big difference.

The next question I want to ask is on the issue around Wellington Street.

I'm not sure how much time we have left before the votes, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I'm not sure either.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: You have 22 minutes and 35 seconds.

Hon. Anthony Rota: We have lots of time.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay.

The issue around Wellington Street, of course, is being debated now. There are different levels of government engaged in discussion on the pedestrian use of Wellington Street, going forward. I know that there's been some discussion between the city and parliamentary staff.

Has the possibility of Wellington Street being pedestrianized been taken into account in the working group's deliberation on creating this new tunnel system?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, the deliberations to this point have taken that into account, but it has not affected the perspective of the business case. Importantly, if there is a desire to have a tunnel network, now is the time to proceed. If we were to hone in on the cost issue, doing this at a later point would be a lot more expensive. Doing this while we are doing Centre Block, the Parliament welcome centre, and block 2, there are a lot of savings.

There's still a significant cost to doing this. There's no question about that. I think the question you pose, though, may be better responded to by the Parliamentary Protective Service or from a security perspective, if that's the angle you're coming at it from.

Mr. John Brassard: Yes. There was that, and the other angle I was looking at was this. With as little traffic as there is on Wellington right now, if that does happen in the future and it is pedestrianized, does that affect the overall efficiency of building these tunnel systems, or does it actually affect the cost in a lesser way?

Mr. Rob Wright: Right. The other side of this, and this will be coming back in the future, is the material handling. There are multiple drivers. As MP Julian pointed out, one is the functionality of Parliament for the parliamentarians and staff. The other, as you pointed out, is with regard to security.

The other side of it is that currently each of the facilities has a stand-alone loading dock and material handling system. This would be moving to a more centralized and nodal approach, which has the benefit of creating more efficient operations for Parliament, with savings from both an infrastructure perspective and an operational perspective over time.

Mr. John Brassard: Right. Just by way of comment, Mr. Chair, on the tunnel system, it's difficult, or I hope we can all find it difficult, to agree that without an absolute cost.... I mean, we're dealing with projected costs here of \$185 million just in construction costs. Then there are all the contingency costs. By my account, it could be a quarter of a billion dollars. Without that final cost figure.... I expect that it won't be that much: It may actually be greater.

I would like to see a little more certainty, if this were to be a supportable item for this committee, of what those costs would be. I understand that we're dealing with projections here, but projections have a tendency to get out of hand really quickly, as we are all aware.

In light of the concern that I have, are there other aspects of the LTVP projects that this board is being asked to make a decision on today with your proposals? If we were to defer this—perhaps to a meeting in the fall, I suspect—would we risk project delays and additional cost increases?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

There is really critical design work that we're actually lagging on now in terms of figuring out how these tunnels would insert into the Parliament welcome centre. The design of the Parliament welcome centre is live and proceeding very quickly. I would say that it is a little pulled behind because of decision-making. That's all understandable, but certainly it would have an impact, no question about that, on our ability to further refine designs, with impacts on construction downstream and costs.

• (1135)

Mr. John Brassard: I appreciate your frankness on that.

The next question is on the nature of the ongoing dialogue with the Senate over the Centre Block infill proposal. Is this still a matter of the Senate seeking more than its 30% proportionate share of Centre Block facilities?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: I'll let Michel have that one.

Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons): At this time, in terms of the various options, obviously one of the options is the 30%-70% proportion. Another one is one floor to each institution. The other one is totally shared space of the two floors. These options came from the administration. There was the beginning of a discussion between parliamentarians, and the parliamentarians feel they need to continue that discussion, so I cannot say that there's a deadlock at this time with the parliamentarians.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Maybe I'll add to that as well.

In my work right now with Senator Tannas, we've had only the one meeting at this point. A lot of things were clarified at that time. As we start back up in September, we'll be trying to figure out what's going to happen at least on the sixth floor and how that shared room is going to work. I think we're going to continue that other discussion on those other two floors.

In my mind, we're at 70% of what happens in that building. We're going to make sure it's shared correctly.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay.

What is the concept for the parliamentarian lounge on that sixth floor? What are you thinking about?

Mr. Rob Wright: It's for further discussion with parliamentarians, but the concept comes from one of the original intents of the Centre Block, which was to have some common space, shared space, within the building, which was lost over time, driven by functional requirements.

The idea of using an infill over the Hall of Honour was twofold. One, as you just mentioned, was to provide additional meeting space and additional workspace for parliamentarians in a shared way. For the sixth level, the idea was to have a more informal gathering space for parliamentarians to come together, whether that's for events or for conversations between senators and parliamentarians, and for members from all parties to be able to have a space to come together on a more informal basis, given that the parliamentary restaurant was really the only space left in the building that was common ground. The reading room, for example, which had that original intent, has been lost over time for functional requirements.

We really tried to go back to the original spirit of the building, of symmetry, bringing light in the building, and creating common space for parliamentarians—many of whom do not have offices in the building—where there is a place and space for them to work, to have conversations, to meet, as the building is meant to support the operations of parliamentary democracy.

Mr. John Brassard: Going back to the report on block 2, the design winner was there, and the second and third place. Is there any backup system in place with the second and third place winners where, if the contract can't be fulfilled with the winner, we could fall back to those positions?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

Absolutely. The whole process was designed that way. All of those firms are very well aware of that. We've had those conversations up front. We are in negotiations with the first place firm at this point. I'm very confident that we will come to a successful conclusion, but that backup plan is there. It's prudence. It's good to have that backup plan there.

• (1140)

Mr. John Brassard: I have a couple more questions.

Construction is expected to begin in 2024-25. When do you expect this to be in use?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

The idea here is to bring Centre Block, the Parliament welcome centre, block 2 and this tunnel infrastructure all online at essentially the same time so that when Centre Block opens, it will be fairly well functioning. There are still some important pieces remaining to be done, East Block and Confederation, but we will essentially have a parliamentary precinct that is an integrated campus that supports the operations of Parliament.

Mr. John Brassard: Finally, the "parliamentary office units" strategy, what exactly is that, just so I'm clear?

Hon. Anthony Rota: Mr. Patrice, go ahead.

Mr. Michel Patrice: It's basically looking at the offices remaining in Centre Block and consulting with parliamentarians and the working group in terms of the size, allocation, standards and your needs.

Mr. John Brassard: Thanks. That's it.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Very good.

We'll go on to Mr. MacKinnon, followed by Mr. Julian.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: It's about the sharing as well.

Mr. John Brassard: I think the Deputy Speaker had something to add.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: I'm sorry, Chair.

It's also about trying to make sure there is sharing between the different groups as well—the government, the House leaders and the clerks—to make sure they all have their units. It's about how those units are constructed and what that sharing is going to be between the Senate and Parliament. A good piece of work is being done there to make sure that is shared correctly.

Mr. John Brassard: I expect there will be consultation among House leaders' staff as to what that's going to look like. I think the same thing applied here in West Block as well. Is that correct?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Our understanding is that consultation is ongoing.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: It's Mr. MacKinnon, followed by Mr. Julian.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Chief Government Whip): Mr. Chair, we are supposed to vote in 11 minutes. I know Mr. Julian has more questions, but I had hoped we would be finished before the vote. I do not know if we will make it, so I will be brief.

I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Wright and his team as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada for a number of years. I also worked with Mr. d'Entremont and, before him, Mr. Stanton. In my opinion, they have done an outstanding job representing the House of Commons on this project.

I have another comment related to Mr. Brassard's question about costs. From what I know, this is a difficult project to manage. The administrations of both houses are involved, and there are a lot of consultations. The National Capital Commission, the NCC, is also involved, and I think that should be reviewed at some point. The management of the project and the delays it can cause in decision-making are key factors in a possible increase in costs. At all stages of this project, we must promptly make the appropriate decisions that are required, and do what we have to do to cooperate with our friends from the Senate.

We had a good discussion about offices last Friday, Mr. d'Entremont. Thank you.

I would also like to share my opinion on the space above the Hall of Honour. Limiting access to a space will inevitably mean that it will not be used optimally. I very much want this space to be shared with the Senate.

Moreover, the old Centre Block, which will be renovated, was very short on working space. It was hard for small groups to hold informal meetings. We know that fewer members are on the Hill right now, in the Centre Block, and so there will be a greater need to hold small informal meetings of four, six, seven or eight people. We will also need working spaces for members, who will be further from their offices. I think therefore that we should collaborate with the Senate in order to maximize this space and to make it available to all parliamentarians. I know it will be useful to the members who need it.

Regarding the tunnels, I firmly believe that we need this underground network for security issues and materials management, for the reasons Mr. Julian raised. As Mr. Julian stated, other parliamentarians have similar spaces, which enable parliamentarians and their staff to save time and maximize efficiency in their comings and goings within the parliamentary precinct. I think some good work has been done in this regard.

In closing, I have been impressed by the process to select the design for Block 2. It was very well thought out. The Government of Canada could use that kind of process in many more cases. Congratulations on your work.

For all these reasons, I support all the ingenious recommendations presented today, including the proposed site of the public café in the Parliamentary Welcome Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1145)

Hon. Anthony Rota: I think Mr. d'Entremont would like to say something.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Yes, two things.

First, Mr. MacKinnon, Ms. Sahota and I make a very good team. We have very productive discussions in the committee about what we need to do. We try to proceed quickly, and we know that we have strong support.

Secondly, members whose offices are further from the House will have access to rooms and lobbies that they may use for small meetings of four to six persons. There will also be offices for them to make calls. That will be very helpful for members coming to the House whose offices are not in the Centre Block.

[English]

There are a number of things. As you walk in, on the first floor underneath the chamber, that will all be support stuff for the MPs, including the lobbies. They will be structured a fair bit differently from what we're used to, but hopefully all of those design elements will be incorporated into what Mr. MacKinnon is trying to purvey there as well.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Since there will be a vote in a few minutes, perhaps we should suspend the meeting. I have a number of questions—

Hon. Anthony Rota: That is for the members of the Board of Internal Economy to decide.

[English]

Do we want to suspend and go to vote, or do we want to vote on our phones and continue with this?

Mr. John Brassard: I'm going to go in the chamber to vote.

Hon. Anthony Rota: I believe we want to go to the chamber.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: I think it would be preferable to suspend the meeting.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Okay.

If everyone agrees, we will suspend the meeting until the vote is completed. We will then resume after the vote. Please join our meeting once the vote is completed.

• (1215)

[English]

Hon. Anthony Rota: We're going to resume the meeting.

I believe there were some questions being asked.

Mr. Julian, you were in the middle of one.

• (1220)

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

Yes, I have a series of questions I want to ask.

Mr. Brassard's questions around the overall cost, I think, are very relevant.

I want to look at the issue of the tunnels from a cost perspective, in terms of both what the parliamentary precinct would gain and what we would lose if we didn't put the tunnel network in there. My questions, to start, are on the cost of the West Block and the East Block tunnels that we had originally. The West Block tunnel was known as the "bathroom tunnel" because it was lined in yellow tile, as I recall; and the East Block tunnel was far nicer. So there's the cost of those two tunnels being built.

Regarding the existing tunnel network in the parliamentary precinct, Mr. Wright, you mentioned that the West Block renovations actually had provision for a tunnel network, so I am wondering to what extent an existing tunnel network is in place and can be built on from that.

My third question in my first set of questions—and I'll have a second set of questions—is around the absolute necessity for material management and what would be required. If we put aside the issue of pedestrians or MPs or visitors or staff or anyone else using the tunnel network, what is required for purely material management? I know that was certainly an issue around the West Block tunnel project as well.

Those are my first three questions, and I'll have a couple of others after that.

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the questions, Mr. Chair.

It's important to note that the initial tunnels that are mentioned had to be disassembled for the Centre Block and Parliament welcome centre project, so those tunnels that connected the old Centre Block to the old West Block and the East Block have been disassembled.

But you are quite right. As part of constructing the West Block, a tunnel infrastructure was put in place, and it was put in place with this forward path envisioned.

If we go back to 2017, Parliament and the government endorsed the concept of this tunnel infrastructure, so that was put in place with what we're talking about today in view. The cost of that tunnel infrastructure, phase one of the visitor welcome centre, was \$129 million. That permanent infrastructure will connect into the Parliament welcome centre and will essentially enable this connection point for tunnel W, so it's going to be used not only for the current vocation of the West Block but also for the permanent vision for the operations of Parliament.

On the second question, around material management, if the tunnels did not proceed, we would have to go back, essentially, to the drawing board, on a strategy for material management. That would probably lead us to going back to the traditional approach of having a loading dock on each individual building. Those would have to be designed in and constructed. They are currently not designed for the Centre Block, for example—and not planned for block two, or the future.

I don't have a cost estimate for you today on that, but there would be a significant cost of putting in place that infrastructure for material management. There would also be an important cost, from an operational perspective, for the House of Commons and the Senate to operate that from a building-by-building perspective rather than from a more centralized one.

The last thing I'll mention is that a large part of this really is about creating an enhanced security posture for the parliamentary precinct, a more secure perimeter. As soon as each and every building has to have an individual loading dock, you're bringing large trucks into each and every building, which would be something the Parliamentary Protective Service would have to consider if that were to be the path forward.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Wright.

If that is the very rough estimate of the figure for the auxiliary costs of building the tunnels, which you mentioned a little bit earlier, can you give us a very rough estimate of the figure for reconfiguring the designs of each of the buildings, applying loading docks for each of those buildings, and then applying the operational cost of no longer having a centralized material management but rather going back to a 20th century kind of thing of each building having its own material supply? Is that in the tens of millions of dollars? Is that \$100 million? What would that cost be?

• (1225)

Mr. Rob Wright: I would want to be careful to give you estimates that would be useful for your deliberations. The costs would be significant. I could say that. Many millions of dollars would be at stake in that, and operational inefficiency would as well.

I couldn't today give you a number that would really be useful to you, I don't think.

Mr. Peter Julian: But there is an undoubted capital cost, and then there are much higher ongoing operational costs. If we're looking at the parliamentary precinct over the next quarter of a century, whatever that cost x is.... If it's \$10 million a year, that would easily reach, over 25 years, a quarter of a billion dollars.

Mr. Rob Wright: Absolutely. I mean, the critical thing, and what we're trying to do here, is to design and construct, hand in hand with Parliament, an integrative facility that meets your needs for the next century and beyond. For any investments, we're trying to make sure they are permanent investments that serve Parliament into the future rather than a series of temporary investments that at a later point don't serve or that are not "future-proofed", if you will; that's perhaps the best term here.

One benefit of this tunnel network is that it provides benefits from the perspective of the movement of people, the movement of

goods and security. It also provides "max flex" for the future operations of Parliament.

Mr. Peter Julian: It would be fair to say that the operational costs of not proceeding could well be as high over an extended period of time, and higher in the long term, as of proceeding with this project.

Mr. Rob Wright: If you look over the life cycle of these buildings, and we really talk in century life cycles for the investments that we're making, you are definitely talking about very significant alternative costs of not proceeding in this direction.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you. That was very helpful.

I think a figure is often daunting until you look at the alternatives. Then you see an equally daunting figure without the efficiency and without the ability to move. It's not a question of buying a winter coat or not. It's really a question of the most effective way of proceeding through the coming years so that operationally we're saving money and we're not having the duplication we've had up until now, where each building is supplied individually.

There's a whole range of downsides to that, as I think we're all aware. It's why every other Parliament in a major industrialized country has moved to a model with a centralized material management system and pedestrian access to buildings through a tunnel network. It just makes sense. The U.S. Congress is the best example of that, I think. The European Parliament is another one.

Can I ask a final question? I have no doubt, in looking at the proposed development, that the W to D, that ring circle, which is very similar to how the U.S. Congress functions very efficiently, is obviously the best model. But what if we went with what I could only call the "cheap" version, which doesn't have the same flow and doesn't provide for the same security access? That would be the A tunnel from West Block right across to the Wellington extended block 2 and block 3 tunnel, and then E from the East Block right across to block 1. Those are short tunnels. I understand that there is an existing tunnel from East Block that already goes to Langevin. I'm not sure whether this is a new tunnel or a tunnel that would build on that existing tunnel that goes across to Langevin.

What would be the cost comparison for that? I certainly understand that in terms of material management you'd lose a whole advantage from the W-D recommendation. Certainly, in terms of security it's much dicier, because people would have to move through the West Block and move through the East Block to access the south of Wellington.

Is there a rough cost differential between the A and E scenarios and the W-D scenario?

• (1230)

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

Surprisingly, there is not. While it's intuitive that a shorter tunnel would be a lot cheaper, it's much more technically complex, because if you look at the West Block example, the tunnel infrastructure has to go in and under the foundation of the West Block. You can see tunnel W kind of skirts around. It's much more technically complex, and we'd have to put new stairwells and elevators into the existing West Block at the southern portion while the West Block is operational to serve Parliament. It's very complex, so it is actually pretty much a wash from a financial perspective, and it involves a much higher-risk approach.

These alternative tunnels, W and D, can be implemented with minimal disturbance to Parliament, and you can see how they're kind of a straight shot—still technically complex—through the bedrock rather than having to work underneath the foundations of the buildings, which adds a tremendous amount of technical complexity and disruption to Parliament and the associated costs that come with it.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much for your replies.

In view of all the information we have just received, I support the recommendation. I think it all makes good sense. If we do not approve this recommendation, which is intended to establish a system for materials management and access to Parliament Hill, it will end up being more expensive. Thank you for answering all these questions.

I support the recommendation.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you.

Are there any other questions or comments?

If not, I have a question.

[English]

I'm not sure whether this is more a question of management than of design. We now have a shuttle system on the Hill that operates on a daily basis. Would that shuttle system be needed if we had the tunnels? If we don't need it, what is the cost on an annual basis of operating those shuttles, both in replacement costs for the shuttles and in operations, not only in fuel but in human resources?

Michel, go ahead.

Mr. Michel Patrice: I'm going to provide a high-level response because I don't have the details in terms of the cost, but obviously in terms of the shuttle service, which is needed for the transportation of parliamentarians and staff between various locations, during the winter—the time when the weather is not the best—there's definitely a cost.

With underground tunnel circulation, there probably will be an assessment of that service. It's going to be a decision for the future, but probably it would be stopped.

We have a number of shuttle buses, over 10, and they are quite costly. In terms of life cycling, we're trying to extend the life cycle of each of those shuttles to get the maximum usage we can, but we could definitely have significant savings in terms of both the equipment and the staff needed to operate them.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Mr. d'Entremont, go ahead.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: I also think that when it comes down to accessibility, for those who might have problems walking.... We have a bunch of different mobility issues with members of the House of Commons, so I would say that within the tunnel system we would probably adopt more of an airport kind of model and have some of those golf carts that they use. I think the amount of money you would use on those versus on a bus would probably be far lower and they would be far cheaper to run in that respect.

There's opportunity for people to—

• (1235)

Hon. Anthony Rota: It's interesting that you should mention that, because my next question has to do with moving sidewalks like the ones they have in airports. Is that something being considered?

Mr. Rob Wright: Thank you very much for the question.

We have not done a full assessment of those different techniques to facilitate movement, but we certainly could, if it was the will of the committee. We could look at moving sidewalks and other aspects as well.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Are there any other questions?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: You can get your own golf cart.

Hon. Anthony Rota: That's perfect.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Chief Opposition Whip): It has to be electric.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Yes, of course. It might be hydrogen by then. I don't know.

Are there any more questions or comments? I think we're done.

I want to thank both of you for being here today and for putting up with the vote.

I just want to make a comment. Bruce Stanton was the epitome of a Deputy Speaker. When he left, I thought, boy, this is going to be tough to replace. I want to say, Mr. d'Entremont, that you have been doing a wonderful job both on this committee and as Deputy Speaker.

I understand that you have an anniversary coming up as well for 25 years of service.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: It will be 19 years of elected service this August. It will be 25 years as a political person, longer than I should.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you for your years of service, and your years of service here on the Hill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Rota: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Now we'll go in camera. Do we have consensus on the recommendation to proceed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Very good.

[*Translation*]

We will take a few minutes to go in camera.

The meeting is suspended.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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