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(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee
on Procedure
and House Affairs**

Queen's Park Restoration
Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 20 April 2023

**Comité permanent
de la procédure
et des affaires de la Chambre**

Loi de 2023 sur la restauration
de Queen's Park

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 20 avril 2023

Chair: Jennifer K. French
Clerk: Christopher Tyrell

Présidente : Jennifer K. French
Greffier : Christopher Tyrell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PROCEDURE
AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA PROCÉDURE
ET DES AFFAIRES DE LA CHAMBRE**

Thursday 20 April 2023

Jeudi 20 avril 2023

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 1.

**QUEEN'S PARK RESTORATION
ACT, 2023**

**LOI DE 2023 SUR LA RESTAURATION
DE QUEEN'S PARK**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat Act, 2023, and to make certain amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act/ Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur le Secrétariat de la restauration de Queen's Park et apportant certaines modifications à la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et à la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Good morning, members. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will now come to order. We're here today for public hearings on Bill 75, An Act to enact the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat Act, 2023, and to make certain amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER
AND RESPONSES**

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We are joined this morning by the minister and officials from the Ministry of Legislative Affairs. Welcome, Minister Calandra, and thank you for joining us this morning. You and your team will be allotted 20 minutes to make an opening statement on the bill, and then this will be followed by 40 minutes for questions from members of the committee. If I could ask that the ministry officials please state their names for the record before they begin speaking. Minister, you may begin whenever you're ready.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, colleagues. Colleagues, I'm pleased to be here today to present Bill 75, the Queen's Park Restoration Act, 2023. With me is Carlene Alexander, Deputy Minister of Legislative Affairs, and Tehani Mott, director in the Ministry of Legislative Affairs. If it pleases the committee, I will offer a brief summary of the proposed legislation with the intention of providing additional context for your more detailed consideration of the bill.

The overarching intent of the legislation is to create the legal framework in which a comprehensive restoration of Queen's Park can effectively and efficiently be carried out by the government on behalf of the assembly and with the oversight and direction of parliamentarians directly. I believe what we have put forward achieves that.

The first step in accomplishing this is to establish, in statute, a new ministry called the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat. It is intended that this will be the successor ministry to the Ministry of Legislative Affairs. While the Ministry of Legislative Affairs could certainly proceed with the restoration project on its own, establishment of the secretariat in law creates long-term stability for the project, which we anticipate will take several Parliaments to complete. Further, the legislation will tie several statutory consultation and reporting obligations to the secretariat which don't currently apply to the Ministry of Legislative Affairs. These obligations are a key element of the core objective of parliamentary oversight in this project.

First, the legislation proposes an obligation on the minister and complementary obligation on a standing committee of the assembly to work together on a substantive decision within the restoration project. I think perhaps members assumed, but I'm comfortable clarifying, that if this committee and the House passes the bill, it will be my intention to put forward a standing order amendment in the House to specify this committee as the oversight committee of parliamentarians referred to throughout the legislation.

The question of how to define a substantive decision has come up, and while the legislation leaves some latitude to the minister responsible for the project, let me be very clear that I intend to seek the committee's advice frequently, as long as I, of course, have the privilege and the responsibility for the project.

I think most of you know that I'm a passionate parliamentarian, and while we do not always agree, we do agree on the importance of this institution. When we set out to develop the legislation, it was my first directive that the role of Parliament in this project be protected. So to ensure that if there is ever a disagreement between the minister responsible for the project and the committee on what matters should come before the committee, we have been sure to include a provision specifically empowering the committee to provide input and advice on any matters

related to the project which it might wish to. This is, of course, in addition to the committee's standing authority to inquire into any matter within its mandate from the House. I believe that the committee oversight piece of the bill is strong, but I do look forward to any feedback you might have.

I would also like to take a moment to address questions which have been raised about how effective the committee oversight will be, considering that the government members make up a significant majority of the committee. While this is true, I think there is real possibility that inaugural members of this committee—as the inaugural—this is why I don't read speeches often, colleagues, as you can see. As the inaugural members of this committee, you may have the ability to set a standard that is collaborative and cross-partisan, in a similar fashion to what we see on the public accounts committee.

I think we can also all recognize that a project of this scope and importance should rise above partisanship. That is why we've included a secondary consultation and oversight obligation between the secretariat and the Board of Internal Economy. As members know, the BOIE conducts meetings in camera and has a membership that is equal between the government and recognized opposition parties. It operates on the principle of unanimity. The BOIE can dispassionately assess and make apolitical recommendations in the best interests of the project, even when this committee might be seized with a political disagreement.

The nature of a collaborative relationship between the BOIE and the secretariat is proposed with distinctions from the relationships between the committee and the secretariat. Notably, there are minimum-quarterly reports required from the secretariat, and the board possesses the power to seize the minister with requests which the minister must take reasonable steps to implement. Where this is impossible or impractical, the minister must provide a detailed explanation justifying such a finding. The additional character of the relationship between the BOIE and the secretariat is intended to enhance the level of parliamentary oversight and involvement in the project while respecting the need of government to reasonably manage it.

The formal channel of consultation specified in the legislation between the deputy minister responsible for the secretariat and the Clerk of the Assembly: This final channel is intended to facilitate the much more frequent day-to-day communication between the assembly and the government while also further removing politics from the equation.

My intention in putting forward this collaborative framework is to clearly establish that while the government will take on the project, the end-user of the finished product—the client—is the assembly, and the assembly is all of us as members.

Next, I would like to discuss how the legislation would establish an internal ministry structure to support the project. While the secretariat would bear all of the standard character of a small ministry—a minister, deputy

minister, political staff and officials, all with the singular mandate to carry out this restoration project—we do have some unique components.

First, we propose that the secretariat would include an executive project working group which would consist, at a minimum, of a representative of the minister, deputy minister and the Clerk of the Assembly. In practice, this would be a larger body. It could very well include members of provincial Parliament, representatives of a project delivery agent, contractor, architect, heritage experts, accessibility experts, security experts, and more as needed.

Secondly, we propose that the secretariat could establish advisory committees with potential remuneration. Appointments to these committees would happen in the same manner as other government appointments and would be subject to the same parliamentary oversight. The committees could be stood up or wound down as they are needed throughout the project. Possible committees could be established on the subjects of heritage preservation, accessibility or security, and representatives of those committees could be appointed to the executive project working group to report into it or take away matters for consideration. These internal bodies will advise the minister responsible for the secretariat, with the executive working group meeting quite regularly to coordinate decision-making and progress across the entire project. These internal structures, from the advisory committee through the minister's office, will ensure effective and accountable management of the project, along with all required consultation.

0910

In practice, the minister may make a decision on a question presented to them by the executive working group as a group and escalated from the delivery agent through the secretariat. The minister may consider advice in making this decision from an advisory committee or ministry staff, and the minister may seek advice on that decision from the standing committee, the BOIE or both. The BOIE may direct the minister to take some other course of action, all while representatives of the Clerk work with representatives of the deputy minister on day-to-day matters.

At the same time, contractors will be held to account by the delivery agent, the delivery agent will be held to account by the secretariat, and the secretariat will be held to account by this committee and the BOIE. The structure is very robust, and is robust enough to handle this complex project. Decision-making authority is clear and oversight mechanisms are responsible and comprehensive.

There are a few other key elements of the legislation, including a provision tying the role of the government House leader to the minister responsible for the secretariat. I'm proposing this because, having served in this role of government House leader since 2019, it is clear to me that the best steward of such a project is the minister who is the most intricately connected with the assembly, its functions, its staff and its processes—my staff wrote this part; I don't necessarily agree. But anyway, I think it's safe to say that I personally will not be the minister responsible

for this project for the next 15 years or a few decades. One never knows—stranger things have happened—but in case I am not, the one who sees it through to completion, whoever it is, will also have to work with parliamentary contacts by virtue of their role as the government House leader.

I would also like to discuss the transitional provisions in the legislation which facilitate a decant of the assembly to another location. First, we have included a mechanism by which the BOIE may delegate certain authorities over the legislative precinct to the minister responsible for the secretariat. This is intended to allow legal authority to flow to the secretariat or agents on the minister's behalf to conduct preliminary or exploratory work in the building while the assembly is still here.

Second, we have included regulation-making authority for the cabinet and the Lieutenant Governor in Council to alter the definition of "legislative precinct" as it appears in the act. This allows for a seamless transition for the assembly from Queen's Park to another location when it is time to do so, without requiring legislation. We do acknowledge this proposal is somewhat extraordinary, which is why we are tempering the new power with a requirement that the BOIE approve the regulatory change. In effect, the legislation proposes that the government could legally move the area that is our legislative precinct, but only on approval, all-party-consensus-based, through the BOIE. Similarly, the provision facilitates the assembly's move back to Queen's Park at the end of the project.

One final substantive provision of the bill is the proposed amendment to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. As members know, the assembly itself is largely not subject to freedom-of-information requests because of its constitutional independence from the executive branch. A proposed provision in this legislation simply widens the existing protection over records of the assembly to ensure it continues to apply if they are shared with the secretariat, which would be fully subject to FIPPA. This allows the assembly to freely share its records and advice with the government, while confident that they are not inadvertently disclosing information which they otherwise could not. It allows a free flow of information to ensure consultation and collaboration is quick and effective. For clarity, this does not mean that the project itself will be excluded from FIPPA; all project records in the custody of the secretariat or in other ministries will continue to be subject to the standard FIPPA requirements.

Finally, we have proposed some continuity provisions for the BOIE which reflect its increasing mandate, ensuring it can function between Parliaments and during elections, as well as wind-down provisions for the conclusion of the project which empower the standing committee responsible for the oversight to determine whether the project is complete and propose the revocation of these statutory provisions when the time comes.

So again, Madam Chair, thank you for your time, and just in advance, thank you, colleagues. I know you've done a lot of work. I've watched the committee hearings

that you have undertaken both in Ottawa—and I do appreciate everything you've done to this point.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you, Minister. I know that the committee members—to your point—have been very engaged in this project and have been looking forward to having you here.

I recognize MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Minister, for being here—and to the two of you, as well. This has been an exciting process for us. You touched on it a little bit. I've been part of several different committees here over the last two terms of government at Queen's Park, and, dare I say, this one probably functions the best.

Is it okay if I say that, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): You may.

Mr. Mike Harris: Well, it's too late; I've already said it.

We've been doing a great job, and I think one of the testaments to that here is that, as we move through our questions and comments this morning, we don't have government and official opposition rotations. We're doing this as a very non-partisan team effort, and I think that's really key—you touched on it—to seeing this project come to fruition.

One of the questions that has come up here a few times is the relationship between the Ministry of Legislative Affairs and also, hopefully to come, the secretariat, and this committee. So I was hoping you might be able to touch a little bit on what you see that looking like—how you can make yourself available to this committee, how our colleagues can make themselves available to this committee, and how you see that relationship growing through the future.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I will say that we began to contemplate this in the previous Parliament—that that decant was coming and that a restoration had to take place. At that point, we started to make some standing order changes, which created this committee, which in part guaranteed that the opposition would have the Chair of the committee.

Moreover, through the legislation, we've put in guarantees, in essence, that while the government is undertaking this on behalf of the Legislature, it is this committee and the BOIE which will retain the ultimate authority of how this place is envisioned for the next number of years, for the next number of Parliaments. That was something that we thought was very, very important. We did it that way because we took a long look at what was happening in Ottawa—and I think you guys heard a lot of that through your committee hearings, the couple of days that you spent in Ottawa. We also looked at other jurisdictions and some of the problems that they had faced when they removed parliamentarians from the process.

We'll continue to take advice, but I think we've gone the extra step to make sure that government understands that this is a project that, while being undertaken by government, is being undertaken on behalf of parliamentarians, and then that parliamentarians, through this committee and through the BOIE, will be the ultimate

decision-makers on this place for the next generations of parliamentarians.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Minister—and your officials, as well—for being here this morning.

As the minister and everyone on this committee knows, the population of Ontario is growing—it seems like it's exponentially some years—and obviously that means the number of parliamentarians will grow as well.

How will this restoration project help ensure accommodation for future requirements? I know we saw a bit of it in Ottawa, how they're trying to ensure as their growth as well, for representation—so if the minister would be willing to elaborate on that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think one of the things we've heard from parliamentarians is—a number of things: that the precinct and the inability to house members in the precinct has been a challenge, so we want to take a look at that. We want to take a look at the space as it is utilized right now, with a look at—we have to not only accommodate existing parliamentarians; we have to be in a position to accommodate future growth. And what does that mean? While we're also looking at this structure, what does future potential growth mean and how can we accommodate future parliamentarians? But ultimately, what we're looking at is better appreciating that members of provincial Parliament have to have access to their building, people have to have access to their building, and for members to effectively do their job, they have to be in proximity to Parliament. All of those things, I think, in part, are why we want parliamentarians to help us lead the restoration efforts of the precinct.

0920

But it also goes a step further, if I can say this. Ontario, as Mr. Harris has pointed out, is the fifth-largest government in North America—over 15 million people, over a trillion dollars in economic capacity—and we are only recently in a position where we can televise each of our committee rooms. We're only recently making the upgrades to modernize how we approach politics or governance and bring it closer to the people. In order to do that, I think we also have to upgrade our facilities so that our members can actually do the work that they're asked to do, so that will be at the heart of everything that we're trying to accomplish over the next number of years.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. West, and then Sam.

MPP Jamie West: Apologies, Chair. I wasn't sure if we were doing a round robin or time-limited, so I apologize to the committee. I'm on cold medication, so I'm two or three seconds behind.

I want to thank the minister for his presentation, and also, I'll compliment the committee. I think we all share this sentiment that, really, we've grown a lot as a committee in really working together on this, and I think the trip to Ottawa helped with that, where we—I hope I can speak for everybody—recognized that what we're doing isn't necessarily anything we might see during our careers;

this is something that we're doing for future parliamentarians, future visitors to the place. I think that really helped connect the work we're doing forward.

One of the things I think we're united about—there are lots of things we're united about, but one of the things that we're united about, for sure, I think, is ensuring that stability as time goes on. I know you spoke about it specifically, but just in layman's terms, as people probably will approach us in the future: How do we ensure that this doesn't become partisan as governments or ministries change, and how are we able to articulate that to the public?

Hon. Paul Calandra: That's a very important question. It's something that we really looked hard at as we were drafting the legislation, because we have seen in instances, as governments change, then sometimes—it was actually highlighted to me that across the street, the government complex is 50 years old and is being completely renovated and brought up to modern standards. This place for parliamentarians is—it's been 100 years since we have had a significant upgrade of this place, so we wanted to break down that barrier and create the stability. That's why we went with the role of a secretariat and are tying it to the government House leader's office. It's why we made some of the standing order changes in the last Parliament to create this committee.

As you look at it, both the role that this committee will do—and, if the legislation is passed, there's another standing order change that will tie this committee to the new secretariat, as well as the oversight mechanisms that come through the Board of Internal Economy. It will, in my opinion, help ensure that, regardless, that stability is there and that we will have progressed in such a fashion that it would be very, very difficult for a subsequent government—let's be honest; we want to get to the position where we have made the decision and we're moving forward.

But the other part of it, too, Jamie, is this: It's why we wanted to start off right at the beginning as collaboratively as possible with it, because all parliamentarians have to understand and believe that this is an important project to undertake. Otherwise, it would go off the rails. Again, just the work that you guys did in Ottawa really, I think, helped frame the direction that we're going in.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Oosterhoff, and then I'm putting myself on the list, and then Mr. McGregor.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Minister. I know you're very passionate about this subject. It's one that we've all really become enthralled with as well.

I'm wondering if you've had the opportunity to speak with others who share or have shared in the past a similar type of role that you are now in, which is some of the executive oversight of not necessarily the project per se in terms of the construction but in terms of the preparations for the construction in the secretariat. Have you had the opportunity to speak with anyone from any other jurisdiction who was—not just the bureaucrat side, as important as that is. We met with them and the project managers; no

offence. But really on that legislative accountability piece, the minister responsible for the project, have you had the opportunity to speak with anyone like that? And what lessons did they share?

Hon. Paul Calandra: So I would say I was lucky enough that I was in Ottawa. I was a member in Ottawa at the time when that process was nearing the commencement of the larger restoration project and speaking at that time with the minister who was responsible and being a part of the oversight committee in Ottawa in advance of the commencement of the real heavy work.

It was the number one thing that we heard from the minister and from the opposition parties at that time, and specifically from the minister at the time, who was Minister Ambrose, that unless you turn this into a non-partisan function, where all parties buy into what it is you're trying to accomplish, she said—it's exactly what you said: You will never see the benefits of the work that you are doing but future generations will. But you have to get buy-in. We heard a lot of that when I was in Ottawa.

Secondly, as I said, we reached out to other jurisdictions: The UK, what was their experience? They have a much more difficult project, obviously, than what we have, but yes, involving parliamentarians but also breaking down some of the silos that exist between government and parliamentarians so that they can actually undertake the work. We've reached out to Manitoba to see what their experiences have been, Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec, all smaller in scale than what we're contemplating but still some of the same challenges. Primary amongst it all has always been that whatever you undertake in a legislative precinct, it's for the members and it's for the people you represent, as represented by the members in this place, and it cannot be a government project. It has to be a project led by members for members, with the authority of the Speaker and the Clerk always being recognized and through the BOIE. So we've done a lot of that, just to make sure, and hopefully we've reached a good balance in the act on that.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. And as threatened or as promised, I'm putting myself on the list, followed by McGregor, Hogarth, Gallagher Murphy and back to West, just so you know.

Minister, one of the things that we have been discovering as a committee is that we have lots of ideas and thoughts and interest from the broader community that is growing. Everyone has an idea about where we should go or changes that we should make.

As a committee, I know that we have a lot of independence. But as you are formalizing ties between the secretariat and this committee, I think we would be interested in hearing what that could look like in terms of retaining the independence but being useful. Are there ways that we could support the project specifically, whether that's a community survey, as we've talked about, of members, or broadly from the province? I guess many of the things that we are hearing are going to lead to, potentially, recommendations. So is that an opportunity for us to make recommendations to government broadly, specifically to the secretariat? I'm just curious about the logistics.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Specific to decant and where we go, the BOIE is doing a needs assessment for us at this time so that we can really get a full understanding of what are the absolute minimum requirements that are required in order to allow us to decant and to move to another facility. Through the BOIE, the Clerks and precinct properties are helping us understand what that is, and once we have that framework truly completed through that work, I think then we'll be in a position where we'll be able to say, "Look, this is what we require." And it is something we will come back to you with and say, "These are the minimum requirements."

0930

I will have some thoughts—I am sure all of you will have some thoughts—as we look at a decant. I don't think I'm speaking out of turn by saying that, for most of us, for the most part, we want to be close to the public service that provides us assistance. We want to be in the same general area to make it as seamless as possible. So we will come back to you once we have a full needs assessment, and we will come back with options, if options are available. You have our commitment that we would come back to you on that.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you, because we certainly have heard from precinct properties and know that the precinct boundaries, specifically, may need to change, as there are—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes. We reference that in the bill. The BOIE, through the committee recommendations, can give us the authority to change what the precinct is, so that at some point, when we're ready to decant, this no longer is the legislative precinct so that the work can be undertaken and then we recognize something else as the precinct. The legislation does contemplate that, but always through the backstop of the BOIE.

On the final analysis as well, the committee will also undertake, when the project is completed—whoever is serving on this committee at that time will have the responsibility to assess whether the work is actually completed to the satisfaction of members through this committee. And then we would begin the transfer back and, frankly, the dissolving of the secretariat and the ministry.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay, thank you.

As promised: Mr. McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Good morning, Minister. Good morning, Deputy and Ms. Mott. Thank you for being here. I want to draw attention to—I'll echo my colleague's comments around the non-partisan nature of what we've been doing. I think, in general, I would say—I don't want to speak on any colleagues, but certainly I feel like it's a very non-partisan, collaborative committee. I think that's very important as we go forward, again understanding that none of us will be here, except for Mr. Oosterhoff, with the new building.

I wanted to ask about schedule 3 of the bill, which is specifically around freedom of information and privacy concerns, because while we're making efforts to make sure that we're not necessarily making a partisan issue of

it, there's still the issue of public relations and making sure that the public are taken along the journey, the citizens and residents of Ontario are taken along the journey. Could you maybe explain a little bit of the methodology around exempting some of the work that's going to be undertaken from the freedom-of-information act?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The assembly right now is exempt from FIPPA requirements. We, as a ministry, are not exempt, but we do require documentation from the assembly which—rightfully so, I would suggest—they would be uncomfortable turning over to the government if it did not continue to be protected against broader publication or through FIPPA; as you can imagine, security plans and other things of that nature, which will be transitioned to us during the decant and the restoration of the project.

All of the work that the ministry does on behalf of the assembly will be subject to freedom of information; every ministry that is involved in it will be. What this does is protect the existing exemption for the Legislature and the documents that they may turn over to us in support of that work, but it does make them available after 20 years. The assembly has agreed to waive that exemption after 20 years because we think it would also be very important for future generations that, as other projects might come up, there is access to that documentation.

If I'm leaving anything out, Deputy, by all means—
Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Okay. It really is just for the transmittal of documents from the assembly to the ministry. We will continue to agree to exempt them under the current circumstances that they find themselves in.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Hogarth?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Minister, for being here, and thank you, [*inaudible*], for being here as well and the project you're about to take on. This is about our future, and that's what's so exciting about it. I love this place. I've worked here my whole life, so I'm honoured to sit on this committee.

My question is about creating a new secretariat. One thing we learned when we were in Ottawa is the project was supposed to be this and it grew and grew and grew. I don't believe there's an end date to the secretariat because we're creating a new secretariat. Do you have plans of—things can go wrong—how long the secretariat will be around following the finalization of the restoration project? Are there thoughts on that? That's my first question.

My second is, how do we plan on communicating to the people of Ontario about what's happening throughout this restoration project? Because sometimes when there's a void of information, people just go, "What's going on? Are they tearing it down?" So just trying to figure out how they're going to communicate that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll start, and if there's anything, Deputy, just—

Ms. Carlene Alexander: Sure.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I would say that this is unique in the sense that I might be the only minister that contemplates removing his job at some point in time, right? As we were doing this, as we brought the secretariat online

and as we bring it online, we also wanted to assure the assembly and you and members, all of us, that this isn't an assumption by the government of the assembly. This is a temporary project that we are doing to facilitate a reconstruction that the assembly could not do on its own, and at the conclusion of that project, the secretariat would then be dissolved and the minister and the title would no longer need to be there.

Ultimately, once the project is completed, it will come to this standing committee and they will make the decision of whether the project is completed to members' satisfaction or not. If the committee approves, we will then take the steps to return the precinct back to here, and then the secretariat, I would envision, would be dissolved shortly after that. The records of the secretariat, though, would still be retained. My deputy is also the deputy at the Ministry of Infrastructure, so there is a mechanism to maintain all of the appropriate record-keeping that you would imagine is required, but also to have that continuity once the project is done through an existing ministry so that we can still have that access to the information as required.

As far as communicating it, I'm actually quite excited about it, as I'm sure all of you are. Every government, doesn't matter what stripe, always worries that when you fix something that seems to be for parliamentarians, people will start to get antsy and very upset with you. I think the opposite is starting to happen here, in the sense that people are upset that it is not as easy to get around this place as they think it should be. It doesn't effectively do the work that they want their parliamentarians to be able to do. Now, precinct properties has done a great job, but I think you kind of hit the nail on the head. I think we'll have to work together and envision, how do we communicate this? I think at every single step of the journey—and you saw it in Ottawa, right? It is pretty remarkable what—and in other parts where they're doing this. I think at every single step of the journey, we have to tell people, "This is what is going on here." Once we see the heritage pieces that come with the historical artifacts reports, we have to show people: This is what this building has. This is where we're going with the building. These are the things that we envision this building being in the future, and this is the work that is being done by our tradespeople.

I think it will be a very, very remarkable project, and I think, again, as you said, we have to let people know and not be afraid to let people know every single step of the way. Look, the reality is that I'm sure at some point too, even in this committee, we're going to have disagreements, right? It is what it is, but we'll work our way through it. But at every step of the way, I think we should be proud of the fact that we're creating something for future generations and that will serve the people of the province very effectively for a long time to come.

0940

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I have MPP Gallagher Murphy, followed by Mr. West and Mr. Oosterhoff again. Am I missing anyone? Okay.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Minister, Deputy Minister and Director.

To the minister, your leadership and vision is excellent. Thank you so much for leading us, and as well this entire committee. I agree with my colleagues that it has been a non-partisan approach and it's my favourite committee, so thank you.

That being said, my question kind of falls in with my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I wanted to talk a little bit about project creep, because this is an immense project. We talked about how our role is going to be very much oversight. We will be accountable. We'll have transparency here.

So my question would be—and I don't want to get into the details, but is there some way of how the project might start creeping in a direction of, let's say, extraordinary cost? Is that what's going to be coming back to this committee for some oversight discussion review? How do you envision that part of it? Because I am sure the secretariat will have the project managers and all the details, and we're just doing the oversight. How do you envision that? I raise that because there are so many projects that, all of a sudden, get hit with huge costs or they're going in different directions. That is my question.

Hon. Paul Calandra: That is why we took a bit of time and we wanted to hear what you had—especially on some of the consultations that you heard from Ottawa and what we heard from a lot of the other partners who we reached out to with respect to how they undertook their renovations.

The way we have put forward this legislation I think helps us inoculate ourselves a little bit from that. The government is undertaking the project on parliamentarians' behalf, so the financial oversight, the financial accountabilities that come with a government project are there through what we will be doing on your behalf; but at the same time, oversight by parliamentarians through this committee and then another oversight through the Board of Internal Economy to always make sure that we remain within the scope of what the project is. We've put three layers of accountability there to ensure that we stay there.

Having said that, I'm sure you will be used quite frequently, as you already have been, in anticipation of some of the things that we already want to talk about. I know that the BOIE has referred a couple of items already to you. But as things of a different nature might come up that might require us to move away from something that we might have thought reasonable when the project started, this is where the committee becomes very, very important.

It's also where the working groups—one of the things I heard from Ottawa, which I thought was very interesting and I'll take your advice on, is the decision-making process and how it kind of evolved. I think they talked about how it was becoming a bit cumbersome and then they created another subcommittee, as such, which included the Deputy Speaker and members to make quick decisions, because sometimes the larger committee wasn't meeting as frequently as it had. I think were going to have to do

some of that. This is a very, very big project and the things that can sometimes frustrate us are delays in undertaking the project, but at the same time, ensuring that there is accountability through the members of Parliament for their project for the building.

I would say this: We're very lucky that other jurisdictions have done this before us. It's frustrating that it took us so long, but maybe we're lucky because other jurisdictions have gone through a process and we can copy what worked and what didn't work.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: That's great.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You'll be very busy. Let me just say that the committee is going to be very busy and we expect you to become, as you are already becoming, experts in this project. Your colleagues will rely on you to ensure that you're protecting this place for future generations.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): And actually, if I may, further to that, Minister, we are hearing from not only the BOIE with ideas; we're hearing from community members, and it's starting to be a slow trickle, but different members of the committee are approached by, I will say, experts in their field or interested parties. We have been discussing what we might do with that. I just am mentioning that because, as the secretariat evolves, if there's a place to direct folks like that, where it's not necessarily the committee who is triaging or vetting or any of that—because I don't think any of us feel comfortable in that role. But if we can maybe formalize some of those, how we can work with the broader public until there are definite processes—when we have hearings, that's one thing, but until such time.

Next are Mr. West, Mr. Oosterhoff, Mr. Harris.

MPP Jamie West: I think my question is similar to MPP Gallagher Murphy's, and the Chair's comment. Once this act is passed, do you see the establishment of the secretariat as developing a scope of work or stages? I feel like, with good intention, we're looking at a lot of stuff but we don't have a real sense of the correct order. And then I'm not clear on what our scope is, and I want to make sure we're—the co-Chair and I have had a good conversation about, we need to pass this bill before we go to the next part. So do you see the secretariat as developing those, or is it something we all do in conjunction? What do you see the next steps as?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Definitely, if Parliament passes the bill, then we will be able to start establishing the more formal secretariat. At this point, it has been Tehani and the deputy working, two or three—communications, policy, everything has been handled through there. It's a very close working relationship through the BOIE with the Clerk, frankly, at this stage, just to get an assessment of where we're at.

Once of the reasons why we say we can't decant until, earliest, the start of the next Parliament is because we have to have an understanding of what is required. What are the historical structures? So we're doing that right now. We need to have the needs assessment. Where does Parliament need to go? And then we have to have a discussion amongst

parliamentarians on what we envision this to be. This is the platform that we have, but within this platform, what do we need? I have ideas of what I think we need, but it will be up to parliamentarians to help us make that decision. I will say this: It would have been easier—sorry, Deputy—just to say, “Ministry of Infrastructure, you’re going to be redoing”—that would be such an easy process, but then we didn’t feel that really, truly reflected a separate entity that responds directly to what the needs of parliamentarians are at. That’s why we created this secretariat as such. Once we have it passed, then we will start—and you’ll start seeing some of the reports that the BOIE has already commissioned coming out over the next number of months, both, as I said, the needs assessment—and we will come back to you with that as we start getting information and then as we start doing individual projects. We’re also starting to feel it out, to be honest with you. The BOIE—as I said, we’ve started to send you projects to help us along the way. But we will start to refine what the scope is, how that works.

Jamie was referring to Ottawa, and I thought your hearings in Ottawa were very, very instructive on steps that we can avoid and steps that we can implement which take into account the work that you guys are going to be doing.

The reality is, I think, as you said, people are going to be coming—members have lots of ideas, the broader public have lots of ideas of what they want to see here. You will be inundated once that process starts, and we will support you through the secretariat and work as closely as possible with you to make sure that there is an avenue to fulfill those requests as such.

MPP Jamie West: Chair, I’m just going to excuse myself for two minutes. My daughter is asking me to phone her.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. You may be excused.

0950

As we continue through our list, just to let you know, there’s only five and a half minutes remaining of that 40 minutes that we had allotted. However, we have a couple more minutes. Is it the pleasure of the committee that we keep going until 10? Okay. As needed—well, not past 10.

Mr. Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Minister, one of the things I’ve always liked about you is I’ve heard you described as a “fiscal hawk with a heart.” I think one of the pieces of feedback that I’ve gotten from constituents is questions about the price tag. One of the conversations that we’ve had, at least in the committee, hearing a lot from the people who help to keep this place afloat, is that there are deep costs, great costs associated with not doing this work.

I’m wondering if you could give us a little bit of a sense of that. It’s not just the cost of doing the reconstruction; if we didn’t, there could be catastrophic failures of systems and enormous costs associated with that—beyond just the dollars and cents, I would argue a cost to democracy and the functioning of government. I’m wondering if you

could give a sense of that for the record and for what I should be able to describe to my constituents.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, I think one of the lessons that we really have learned is that when you delay, then the costs continue to rise, to the point where we’re having to close down, decant and reconstruct the building from the inside out, because for so long, nobody wanted to make that investment.

Again, really a strong kudos to precinct properties here. What they have done to keep this place going is extraordinary. You’ve heard all about it.

We just are no longer in a position where we can hope for the best and just keep going. The building and its facilities are at the end of their life cycle, not only in terms of the HVAC and the pipes and lead pipes and all that, which you’ve heard, but it needs to be redone also in recognition of the fact that there are 15 million people that live in this province. It is a \$1-trillion economy. It is the fifth-largest government, as Mr. Harris points out, in North America. We are a G20 country on our own. The facilities that parliamentarians and, more importantly, the facilities and the access that people have to their House of Parliament does not meet the standards that are required.

If you take away every other part of it, like the fact that our systems are an absolute failure, that we are one pipe away from having to decant tomorrow—if you take all of that away, this building has served us very, very, very, very well, but it just does not meet the needs of where we need to be.

Again, it has been talked about so much; I’m not even going to get into all the structure issues because I know you guys have heard it. But it has to be the one lesson that we take away from this, too: Going forward, how do parliamentarians ensure that this does not happen again? How do we put in place—and I think that is something that will eventually come back to this committee. How do we remove it from government’s ability to delay, delay, delay in fear of a repercussion? Delay, delay, delay over 100 years has led us to this point now. I think that will be the next question: How do we make sure this doesn’t happen again?

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you very much. Certainly, the committee learned a lot about storage costs or buying in bulk. Not to diminish that, but it was something we heard over and over—best practices for cost management and managing surprises. So we’re more than happy to share some of what we learned and direct you to the people who we learned that from as this continues.

Mr. Harris, I have you on the list.

Mr. Mike Harris: Ms. Alexander, Ms. Mott, thank you for being here today. I know this has been challenging for you, to manage many things over the last few months as we’ve been developing the secretariat. I wanted to ask you a little bit about that. What does establishing this secretariat mean for you in your work as we move forward? How does it streamline things, make it easier, make it more difficult? I’m just curious to get a bit of a sense from your side of things as to where we’re moving.

Ms. Carlene Alexander: My name is Carlene Alexander, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you very much for the question, MPP Harris. What I would say is that establishing the secretariat will allow us to exclusively focus on this project, 100%. As the minister mentioned earlier, it would have been easy to just say, “Have the Ministry of Infrastructure just go ahead and do this work,” but then you get pulled in different directions, and then you get scope creep on working on different projects etc. So I think establishing that secretariat allows us to exclusively focus on this project.

We will need to build the team, because right now we are a team of three working on the project so far in the early stages. So we will need to build a team. We don’t envision having a very large team; we’re going to be lean, we’re going to be small, we’re going to be mighty and we’re going to be efficient. We will leverage the work of the Ministry of Infrastructure on some of their other projects, so looking at some of those lessons learned.

When the question came up about the price tag and how to manage cost overruns—we will be looking at some of

the big projects that have been done so far, including the Macdonald Block project, which is occurring right now, to figure out how we can mitigate some of those risks from happening in the future.

We’ll be working very closely with the Clerk and his staff, in particular when the report comes through the BOIE in terms of the needs assessment study, and then start the planning, and then certainly be working closely with this committee and others to make sure that we’re effectively rolling out the planning.

Mr. Mike Harris: That’s great. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Do any members have any further questions? Any last thoughts from the minister or team? Okay, well, in that case, I know that we have really appreciated your time this morning. We’ve been looking forward to this and will continue to have questions and ideas to share. Thank you very much for joining us this morning, appearing before our committee and discussing Bill 75.

Seeing no further business, this committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0957.

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