

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

PH-20

**Standing Committee  
on Procedure  
and House Affairs**

Legislative precinct

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 23 November 2023

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

PH-20

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

Enceinte parlementaire

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 23 novembre 2023

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Chair: Jennifer K. French  
Clerk: Christopher Tyrell

Présidente : Jennifer K. French  
Greffier : Christopher Tyrell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PROCEDURE  
AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Thursday 23 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Jeudi 23 novembre 2023

*The committee met at 1300 in room 151.*

LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will now come to order. We have with us today the Minister of Legislative Affairs, the Honourable Minister Calandra. Thank you for accepting the committee's invitation to appear before us today.

As outlined in the invitation letter that was sent to your office, the committee looks forward to the opportunity to discuss the mandate and work of the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat as it pertains to our study on the rehabilitation and restoration of the legislative precinct, including any possible areas of focus for the committee that would be in parallel with the secretariat's work.

Minister, I turn the floor over to you and your team for opening comments. Again, welcome to the committee.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, members of the committee. My objective for today's meeting is to update the committee regarding the work my ministry has undertaken on the Queen's Park restoration project since November 2022 and through the coming-into-force of our governing legislation.

I will begin with some background information on the project: three general approaches to decant planning, jurisdictional research my ministry has completed and an outline of future activities.

Since the Queen's Park Restoration Act, 2023, received royal assent in May of this year, we have established the executive project working group, as required by the legislation. The group serves in an advisory capacity on less substantive project decisions and is accountable directly to me as the minister. Its advisory role is intended to be complementary to the role of this committee, which my ministry will rely on to consider substantive project decisions.

The executive project working group is currently comprised of my chief of staff, the deputy minister's director, the Clerk of the Assembly, on behalf of the Board of Internal Economy and, as supporting members, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the director of precinct properties. As the project advances, I intend to add to the group by leveraging the advice of subject-matter experts and project leaders.

In June 2023, my ministry, with the help of Infrastructure Ontario and in consultation with the assembly, began developing requirements for a request for proposal, which was posted for public submissions in July 2023. We received feedback from several proponents, who have offered a variety of options for leased office space and temporary assembly space. My ministry is currently reviewing the submissions and is determining which options offer the space the assembly will need, along with meeting the necessary chamber requirements while remaining close to the Legislature.

Finally, last month, my ministry provided its first quarterly report to the Board of Internal Economy, as set out in the Queen's Park Restoration Act, 2023. Our approach to the search for a decant location includes the possibility of three general paths, each with advantages and disadvantages, which I will address.

The first option is procurement of third-party leased existing real estate, which can accommodate office space and a chamber in one or more locations. In this scenario, a one-building solution would be preferred but may not be possible to achieve, given the constraints of the spaces on offer.

Advantages of this path include a minimized timeline, due to existing buildings, and the relatively straightforward nature of such a commercial transaction. The disadvantages include difficulty in meeting the very specific requirements of assembly business in third-party space, including satisfactory requirements for security. Additionally, this path will almost certainly require significant capital improvements to leasehold space, which would be temporary in nature and without long-term value.

The second path is a hybrid approach, including a combination of leased third-party space and existing government real estate. In this approach, we can take advantage of the relative simplicity of a commercial lease transaction for standard office space while creating the assembly's special-purpose spaces, such as a chamber and committee rooms, in a government-owned space. Operating within a government-owned space to achieve part of a hybrid option will allow greater control and flexibility to satisfy unique assembly requirements. Further, any capital improvements in owned space can be planned with the objective of also creating long-term value.

The third path is exclusively utilizing government real estate and offices as a potential decant option. While advantages include total control over all decant spaces, the

requirements of the assembly would require operation in multiple locations, if sufficient space is available at all.

My ministry is leading each of these paths on the table as we consider all possible decant options and would welcome the committee's general feedback on a preferred approach. Due to the complexity of this project, my ministry has looked at other jurisdictions to determine some of the lessons learned from other major parliamentary projects around the world.

The first lesson we acknowledged when looking at each of these projects is how to mitigate cost overruns. In the Netherlands, the cost of renovations has doubled as a result of the war in Ukraine. In Austria, they face similar cost increases due to the COVID pandemic and had to go back and amend legislation to increase the project's overall budget, which added significantly to delays to construction timelines.

Here in Canada, the Centre Block rehabilitation project was better prepared for the unexpected delays and costs associated with COVID by having a reserve fund for unexpected cost increases as well as a flexible management approach that allowed the construction process to avoid significant delays.

The Auditor General's report on the rehabilitation of Centre Block by Public Services and Procurement Canada's schedule included roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, planning the sequence of activities using a collaborative approach, scheduling activities to assign resources and timelines, monitoring and reporting progress along with taking corrective action to limit the impact of changes on the schedule. PSPC also developed a variety of tools including an integrated activity and milestone schedule that included planning and construction phases that allowed for coordination between the two phases and implemented a process to effectively manage program costs and risks of costs increasing.

My ministry will continue to work with officials in Ottawa to learn about some of the issues and challenges they faced so we are better equipped when we start the Queen's Park restoration project.

The second lessons we found from our jurisdictional scan was the importance of all Parliament to remain united to support the restoration project. In the Centre Block, the Auditor General found that a fragmented governance structure with insufficient responsibility and accountability for the program being held by the House of Commons and Senate meant that parliamentarians did not receive complete information about the overall scope, cost, progress and risks associated with the project.

The British renovation encountered this problem and has faced significant delays due to Parliament failing to agree on a decant approach. Fortunately, we already have many of these oversight systems in place to ensure relevant parties are engaged on the project.

Tied to this lesson is the cost of not proceeding with the major renovation. The British renovation of the Palace of Westminster is an example of how historical buildings deteriorate over time with an ever-increasing cost of maintenance the longer a renovation is put off.

It was estimated in 2022 that essential maintenance costs reached \$5 million a week and that continued occupancy during construction could result in construction timelines exceeding 75 years at the Palace of Westminster.

Our jurisdictional scans also revealed that other Parliaments have used temporary structures to conduct legislative business. So, for example, in both Austria and Netherlands, officials were moved out of the buildings undergoing restoration and into temporary structures. In Austria, the temporary structures were then reused by the military once officials returned to the restored building.

My ministry's immediate next steps are to continue assessing decant options so we can return in short order to present options for a preliminary decant plan to BOIE and to this committee. The medium-term steps are to finalize a decant decision and seek BOIE's and the standing committee's approval. This step also includes establishing an expert advisory committee and to begin construction planning. The long-term next steps are to prepare the decant location for move-in and begin restoration work here at Queen's Park.

**1310**

Finally, colleagues, with regard to the committee's role in this project, I would like to reiterate that it is my intention to return to the committee regularly with updates and with options for the committee's consideration. These regular updates will allow myself or my ministry to ask the committee to take options away, debate them, test them and provide a recommendation to me as to how the project should proceed.

I believe the committee will be best-positioned to make these decisions by continuing to study the needs of the assembly and the details of other comparable projects in Canada and around the world. Specifically, I believe it would be beneficial for the committee to focus on the needs of parliamentarians, both through decant and the future state of this building.

With that said, at this point I can take some initial questions from colleagues.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you very much, Minister.

I will open it up to the floor. I know that members have been very interested in the process and were eager to have you here, so now that we do, I'm happy to take a speakers' list: Mr. West, Mr. Rae and Mr. Leardi.

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you, Minister, for coming for the update. This has been very helpful. As you know, we were waiting for you to establish the secretariat and all the other work before we could move forward.

There are a couple of questions I had, but one of the comments you made was about the reserve fund that helped the capital project go better. Just from working in construction and in contracting, I immediately thought of cost-plus and how, if you know there's a reserve fund, you find ways to take advantage of the reserve fund—not just because of COVID, but just because it helps with billing. Do you have any idea how they protected against how you put in a bid, but you know there's more money on the table so you can find ways to get at it?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I should mention that this is Deputy Minister Alexander. Sorry; I should've mentioned that.

I don't specifically have an answer of that. Ultimately, it will be us, the role that the committee is doing and the government is doing through the financial mechanisms, which will hold them on track. I am quite serious about this committee having a very robust role in moving forward with that, which will include the financial considerations and making sure that we remain on track, but I'm not sure if there's a specific—

**Ms. Carlene Alexander:** Good afternoon, everyone. Carlene Alexander, Deputy Minister of Legislative Affairs.

There are ways in which we could structure contingency funds to have some that are part of the actual contract, so that would be transparent and project co. would know that it exists, and then there are others that could be approved and held as part of, say, Treasury Board and the Ministry of Finance's contingency funds there. So there are different ways that we can structure it to ensure that we have enough funds to deal with any unforeseen circumstances.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Rae is next, then Mr. Leardi.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you, Minister and Deputy Minister, for your remarks today. I know, as the Chair mentioned, everyone on the committee is very interested in plans going forward. I know your team within the Ministry of Legislative Affairs has been looking at decant options, and I appreciate the three buckets that you presented today.

Minister, I was wondering if you or the deputy minister could elaborate on some of the challenges. We're kind of unique. I know the committee had a chance to go to Ottawa to see there the benefit of having a lot of space compared to downtown Toronto. So if you could delve a little deeper into those sorts of challenges we're dealing with.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, I'll start and then I'll turn it over to the deputy. As I said in my opening remarks, there was an RFP that was put out over the summer, and we received—how many was it?

**Ms. Carlene Alexander:** It was 16, I believe.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** There were 16 different options, but as I said, each of them has some very unique challenges that we have to oversee, security being obviously one of the major challenges that we have, and office space and keeping the Legislature in proximity to the existing public service and to the services that members already are utilizing in and around the existing precinct. So that has been a very, very big challenge.

The ability to recreate the chamber to be an effective chamber also has been a challenge. I guess I would say this before I turn over to the deputy: With all of the talk of the available space that is available because people are working from home, it has not been our experience that that has resulted in a variety of options available to us. But I'll turn it over to the deputy.

**Ms. Carlene Alexander:** Thank you, Minister.

So, yes, just to echo that, I think that security has been one of the key barriers in terms of the fact that we would need a building that is not shared with other tenants, and that is becoming very challenging to find. So to have the combination of the security, the required space, the ability to have a chamber on site—those are some of the key challenges in having all of that in one location. So what we're seeing is you might have one of the criteria met in one building, but they don't meet the other criteria etc. So we likely will get to a place where we need to start to prioritize and figure out what things are most important. As the minister mentioned in his remarks, we are also looking at hybrid options where the chamber might be located somewhere different than the main building. So we are going to have to be a bit creative, I think, in coming up with options to meet all of the needs.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Continuing with the speakers' list—and just giving folks fair warning: I'm going to add myself to the list, in the interest of gender parity, after Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Leardi, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I was trying to think to myself, when this place opened in 1892, how did the elected representatives in Essex county get here? I imagined they would get on a boat somewhere in Essex county and then go to the Welland Canal, and then—yes, it was open, so they would go through the Welland Canal, come here, probably dock in downtown and get on a calèche or a horse and ride to the Legislature. That's what I was thinking. I don't know if that's true or not, but I was going through that, because I was trying to figure out transportation routes to whatever might be the new location and how might members get to the new location, wherever that might be. I didn't know whether we should be talking about airplanes or trains, or what should we talk about. I hope we're not going to be talking about horses, though. Anyway, I offer that to see if there has been any consideration in that respect, transportation routes.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It actually is part of the problem as well: finding a chamber or a decant location that offers enough parking to replace the parking that we have here for staff and for members—again, not as obviously available as one might have thought, given all the talk of people working from home. As much as possible, we've prioritized staying in this area where the eventual Macdonald Block will reopen when our public service will still be located here, and where colleagues who are from out of town—most have their legislative residence in and around this area. So we want to keep as many of the services here as possible. But parking has been a very, very difficult challenge. As the deputy said, you might solve one problem and then there are three other problems that you have to solve at the very same time.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Sandhu.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Minister and Deputy Minister, for appearing before the committee. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for leading this file, because this is a lot of work. We are leaving a legacy behind for the future parliamentarians. I would maybe

request you highlight some of the next very immediate steps and details that you're looking at.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think, for us, the next steps are coming back to you as soon as possible with the ability to finalize options for your review on decant locations—so, for us, finalizing which approach we're going to take, putting the options on the table so that you can see them, and then us being able to take that approved option back and complete the work that needs to be done to formalize a spot and then begin the process of preparing an alternate location so that the decant can happen in an as-soon-as-possible fashion, without disrupting the workings of Parliament.

1320

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Have you thought of Brampton as an option?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think I can confirm that Brampton does not have the available space. It might help make my Brampton caucus members on time for their legislative duties, so for that it might be worth considering.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** You are always on time.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** You're never late.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Perhaps we should invite the minister back more often. That was worthwhile.

Mr. Sarrazin, I'm going to put you on the list after myself.

When the committee went to Ottawa, we had a really worthwhile opportunity there. But also, Hansard came with us, and we do have a lot of our thoughts on the record and our observations. I see head nods, so I think that you're aware of what we had talked about.

One of the things that we had really experienced on-site was the massive need for cataloguing, that as they were taking down the heritage accents and details, there was an immense need for floor space, for cataloguing each individual tile or piece of wood or whatnot off-site and on-site, but the logistics were remarkable.

So when we're talking about space requirements and the use of that space, I hear the minister and I recognize what you have said in working with the flow of this place and the needs, whether it's the mailroom or cafeteria, as well as the chamber and the members' needs. But I see an additional thing that I don't recognize on the deck but that I'm sure you've considered in terms of the storage logistics, both for the restoration work or even removing—to find a spot for that—but also, to the minister's point of how to mitigate cost increases, we heard very loudly and clearly from the project manager, I'll say—I'm not sure that was her exact title—that when they were in a position to bulk-buy the construction supplies, then they were in a position to mitigate cost the increases, because of course we all know that costs are going up. The storage though, for them, was a challenge both in terms of cost to store the extra whatever they were buying, but also, they had some of that space themselves because their procurement system is very different. How is that factoring in?

And while it's still my turn, I'm going to add one more: You said that it's coming back to committee in terms of

our input. I know that the committee wants to do thoughtful and careful work that is helpful, so any background we can have, rather than pick your favourite, we're going to want that. The minister had referenced his first report, as per the act, to the BOIE—if that's something that we could have in whole or in part, if you think that would be helpful, I think the committee would probably be interested in that, if the committee is interested in that.

And now I'm finished.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll start, and then I'll turn it over to the deputy.

I'll just say, in terms of the information flow: Yes. It is our intention to provide you with as much information as possible so that you can make the decisions based on the same knowledge that we have.

Ironically, on storage, we have a storage problem right now even with the place in operation. But I know that the deputy has continued to work very closely with her colleagues in Ottawa, so I'll turn it over to the deputy.

**Ms. Carlene Alexander:** Great question, MPP French. Actually, the team and I were just in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago to talk further about some of the details, and storage did come up in terms of their off-site storage for the heritage pieces etc. What we have been looking at is storage that's going to be required for the regular operations of a decant location, but now we're also turning our minds to, what are we going to need in terms of a storage facility for all of those types of pieces? That will also be a separate process that we're going to have to undertake. I believe that they mentioned that they're going to have two different storage facilities, because the storage needs are even more significant than they thought that they were going to be initially.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It is remarkable what they're doing there. You've all had the opportunity to go. I haven't had the chance to go since I was thrown out, but by all accounts, what they're doing is pretty remarkable and something I think that we'll all be proud of. I think, to the best of our abilities, we want to take that level of care and pride in this place as they have done there. My expectation is that this will be a very hectic construction site for a number of years, because we'll need the space.

They've been very forthcoming. I think you guys found that, too, when the committee visited. But they've been very, very forthcoming, so point very well taken.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** And it was fascinating to be in the middle of a very active construction site, right beside all of the catalogued boxes of tiles and whatnot. They were having to utilize the construction site also for storage. It was quite an undertaking.

Mr. Sarrazin, I cede the floor.

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. I was wondering—maybe I'm way ahead, but the expert advisory committee: Have we put any thought into it? I know at one point we talked about getting engineering from universities across Ontario involved in a project like this one. Is that something we'll consider or are we not quite there yet?



**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think that as the project begins to progress, there will be different areas of expert advisers who will need to be brought into the process, to be honest with you, whether it's on heritage or even, if I can be so bold, on French-language services. We don't do as good a job here, just given the age of the building, as they might do in other Parliaments with respect to translation.

So we will need expert advisories on a number of different areas of the decant and the reconstruction, frankly, because the expertise—we'll pull from everybody. We made it quite clear to the former Clerk: "Whilst you might enjoy some retirement for now, it is our expectation to bring you back to serve on an advisory." So it is something that we intend to rely on quite heavily and to expand, but ultimately ensuring that it is members who have the opportunity to give the final word on how this House will look for future parliamentarians.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Kanapathi, and Mr. West.

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you, Minister, for your hard work. You and your deputy minister, and also your wonderful staff, are working tirelessly. I know it is your passion. I don't know what tablet you take every day. My wife doesn't even give me the tablets, even though the doctor—you wake up; you come here at 5 o'clock in the morning, and I always see your car in the parking lot. Thank you for your hard work and your passion to restore this wonderful, beautiful building.

A couple of points: What is the footprint? If you want to select the location, what is the footprint we are talking about? That is my first question.

My second one is: It has to be in downtown? We have to do some process of elimination. I know so many logistical things are involved. If you want us involved, to find some location with ample parking and close to the highways—401, 404, 407—we could look into that. We have a lot of big buildings in Markham and York region. If you want us to get involved, do some due diligence or some homework for this committee, please let us know.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the question. We definitely will remain within this area, colleagues.

As far as the spacing required, I think it's likely the amount of space that we required is 400,000 to 500,000 square feet?

**Ms. Carlene Alexander:** Yes, exactly.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It's about 400,000 to 500,000 square feet, is what this place encompasses, so that is the space that will be required.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** That's not—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It's 400,000 to 500,000 square feet.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Oh, not 4,500. I was just checking.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, 500,000 square feet is what we're looking at replacing. Finding that, colleagues, as you can imagine, in one location with all of the different outcomes that are required here—I think a bit later on we'll get into a bit more of a specific conversation on some of those things.

1330

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. West and then, Mr. Cuzzetto, you're on deck.

**MPP Jamie West:** I know you are committed to being here, but I would be remiss in not mentioning how close Sudbury is to the centre of Ontario.

*Laughter.*

**MPP Jamie West:** But on a more serious note, I want to congratulate the committee. I think you know this already from previous conversations, but this is a very solid—in the House, very often you talk about colleagues and this is a very collegial committee. And I think part of that was the trip to Ottawa and seeing what they're doing there, which helped us to better understand that what we're doing is really for people coming after us. Just the reality of the workplace that we have is that many of the staff will be here but some of us won't be here after the next election or several elections from now. And that commitment has changed, how we look at this role of the committee and what we're doing for others.

I think that we're trying to do really good work, but we don't have a good sense of the scope of the project, especially after seeing Ottawa and how much was put in place. I know you talked about the executive working group—I forget the title, but—

**Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:** Expert.

**MPP Jamie West:** Expert—thank you.

Is there a vision in terms of a timeline of when we have an idea of the scope of things? Because people are already approaching us to talk about accessibility or storage, like the chairs and that kind of stuff. So is that on the horizon yet or is there still a little work to do before you're looking at that?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Colleagues, in a short period of time, I'll be asking us to go in camera so that we can get a bit more in-depth on some of the issues that we're facing. The reason we're going to be asking that is because we don't want to highlight in public some of the security issues that we're facing on it.

I will say this: One of the lessons we have learned from everybody is that if parliamentarians don't work together on it, then the project goes sideways really, really quickly. And that's when the costs get out of control and that's when the project becomes, frankly, a nightmare. It's one thing I've heard from no matter who I've talked to: Do what you have to do to keep the members engaged so that you are moving forward always. I think that's why, I will say, this is the one committee that nobody ever wants to leave because of the amount of work that you've started to do and the amount of work that you're going to be asked to do very, very soon.

The first steps were just to get a sense out there of what is available to us out in the marketplace, and now it's time to start making decisions. That's when we will really be coming to you a lot more often for input and consideration. It is our intention to be able to provide you with as much information as possible so that when we're asking you to make a decision, it's based on all of the information that we have, as well. That is the goal.

**MPP Jamie West:** Perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Cuzzetto.

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Thank you, Minister, for being here. I noticed everybody put in a pitch for their community. Mississauga–Lakeshore is very close to here. I do have the largest long-term care, and we're going to have the largest hospital there, so I'm just throwing that out there for you.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm not sure what that means about the member.

*Laughter.*

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** But you were talking about the security. I know I'm not on this committee all the time, so what are we looking for? Because we don't have the locations down here due to the security for the members.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Outward facing that you can see in public, before we ask your permission to go in camera—even just things like visitors. When you share a building with somebody else, they might not necessarily want all of their visitors screened the way we insist on having our visitors screened.

The mailroom: As you all of know, every package is screened before it comes into the building. Shared locations might not necessarily have the ability to do that.

Elevators—and then just access to parking lots. Our parking lots are guarded and we know who is where and when. That might not necessarily be the case in a shared accommodation with somebody else. And just given the increasing challenges that we're facing, that becomes a big step.

But as you know, the Parliament also authorized last year an increased authority for our legislative precinct, LPS, including making them peace officers throughout the province. Because we recognize that decant locations might include more than just the precinct, right? We've already started to take some of those steps, but it is a very, very big part of what we're trying to look at.

Those are just the public-facing things. Soon, with your indulgence, we'll go in camera, and I can give you a bit more specifics.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you, Minister.

I see Mr. Rae's hand. I surreptitiously added my name to the list, so I'll put you after mine.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Hey, I've got the pen. I've got the gavel; I've got the pen.

Much of what we've talked about is sort of the upcoming chapter for this. Location, obviously, being what's on everyone's mind as the next obvious question to answer.

This committee, as Mr. West had mentioned, has—I won't say struggled with, but has been interested in the scope of the whole project. We have been using and abusing research to answer our questions that we have when it comes to accessibility, agencies and experts in the community, and needs in-house, so to speak. We've been connecting with Indigenous, Métis and First Nations, and

we've been doing a lot of that work, pulling research reports together.

I think what I would ask, on behalf of the committee—because it is something that we've talked about—is, what are you looking for from this committee that would be helpful? Yes, we're talking about location right now, but your expert advisory committee and other expert opinions are going to—you might be interested in the work that we're doing, of course, but is there something that you would like us to focus on? We reserve the right to refuse your request, though, as the committee. However, we would like to be useful in this, so if there is something that you would highlight that is an ongoing piece for us to work on, it would be appreciated.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, so short-term, I would say that, obviously, once we have the approval on a location, then we can do—it's two phases: the decant and the rebuilding of the temporary space. And then, reimagining, once we have a space, what does the temporary space look like? What do we do with it in the future? In this building here, what are the things that bother everybody?

If I can give an example: I've heard from a number of colleagues that this committee room is sufficiently large, but the other two committee rooms are too small. When there are people that want to participate and there's a larger audience that wants to be there, they're too small. So what does a committee room look like?

Our caucus spaces: Are they big enough? Do they meet the needs not of us, right, but going forward? How do we make sure that we are AODA-compatible? We'll ask you to bring in experts to help us not only with the decant location but also this place going forward. So there will be a lot that we're going to be asking, but for us, in the short-term—and then on security. How do you balance the needs of everyone, which we always struggle with, right? Keeping us but also everybody who comes here safe, whilst, at the same time, remembering that it is the people's House and they can access it.

Our statues, on the grounds: Right now, if I'm not mistaken—and, Deputy, correct me—the government owns the statues, but they're on parliamentary precinct property. Should that relationship be changed?

So there is anything you can imagine, and then we're going to be asking you to do it for a Parliament that will be 10 years from now and 75 years into the future, so that we don't repeat some of the same mistakes. I look around this place. You know, all of your offices are the same. All of the wires that are all over the building because we had to have phones, so we put wires, then we had to have Internet, and then probably, in five years, we will no longer need any of those wires because everything is wireless as it is, so we've got all these—so how do you envision this place 75 years from now?

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And, then, I would say one of the things for me, as well, is: How do we remake this place as a place where people want to come, and that it's not only us that are here and can enjoy it, but people will come here and this will be as

exciting as your city halls are? You have festivals and things at all of your city halls. We want this to be the place that people will come to often as well.

So the amount of work that we're going to be asking you to do—and future committees, frankly—will be only restricted by your ability to do the work. To be clear, there will be times when we will ask you for specific advice and we will ask you to make a decision so that we can progress forward with a decision that needs to be made, but we don't want you to limit what you're looking at.

But I will just say this in closing: It has been slow for us as well at this phase, because we have been looking at the options to decant into, and I think we're as excited as everybody else is to make a decision so that we can begin preparing where we will be in the very near future.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Rae, and then Mr. Sandhu.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** To touch on my comments or questions: When you were talking about that, Minister, and some other remarks from my colleagues today around our trip to Ottawa, we saw where they are in the temporary locations, and you had mentioned translation, where the booths now are essentially in the committee rooms; they're not built into the walls as they are currently here. I think for the members of the committee and, obviously, your ministry, as you go about this, it would be important to—Ontario is growing by a lot, and we're rep-by-pop. That means there will be more members, obviously, in the future and there will be more staff to support those members.

So even for the decant planning—because, as everyone on this committee knows, it's not going to be quick—it's planning for that growth within the population area of Ontario, ensuring that even in the decant, there is that capacity, and then, obviously, when we're coming back to whatever form this takes.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** And that's a very good point. Colleagues, this is not only preparing for the future growth of the Parliament, but the future growth not only of members, but the people who help us do our work. As you know, the assembly has added resources over the last little bit, with the approval of all of you. We've run out of spaces to put people in the building, and as we've talked about upstairs in the library, much of the library collection is digitized. You will be asked, "What space does a library, going into the future, need?"

But even things I've heard from a lot of members who have come up to me: "I've got to bring my laptop in, and I've got to leave the chamber to plug in my laptop." It's such an important part of our—I know it might sound trivial, but what does a new member's desk look like when we decant? What will it include to allow you and future members of Parliament to do their jobs seamlessly?

As you said on translation, colleagues will know—gosh, if you're a translator in this place, you've got to go up the stairs. Great, that was imagined in one way back then, but that can't be the reality in neither the decant nor

in the return to this place. But we're just so limited by space right now.

And look, we're the only Legislature, I think, and correct me if I'm wrong—the monarchists are going to kill me for this, but the Lieutenant Governor is residing inside the precinct. There is no other Legislature that has the LG suite within the precinct. So that's something that we'll have to look at, too, on the return to this place.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I have—oh, you had a follow-up?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I want to pitch my riding for the decant location.

*Laughter.*

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Sandhu.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Minister. You have covered all of the important stuff: inflation, a labour shortage and the cost of everything has gone up. It has already impacted a lot of major projects. So will it pose any challenges for this project or will it cause any further delays?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I would say this: The one project that the Ministry of Legislative Affairs has undertaken so far has been on time and under budget.

*Laughter.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It is my expectation that we will remain on that.

In all seriousness, it will continue to be a challenge. Once you start unpacking what is here—and I think in Ottawa as well and the heritage pieces that they're uncovering there, even some of the things that they didn't know existed. I think it will be incumbent on us to ensure that we do what we have to do to retain and maintain the cost, but always reflect on the fact that this building will be here long, long, long after we are gone. As the previous Clerk told me—and I'm sure the Clerk previous to him told him—"When you look down the street 100 years from now, when somebody looks down the street, this will be the only building that is still here."

All that to say that we will spend what we need to spend to make sure that we can be as proud of this place as we should be but retaining the fiscal handle on it as, I think, taxpayers would expect.

Labour is an issue, and I think, in Ottawa, it has been an issue as well, which has delayed some of the projects. You know that when I was in Ottawa, before they fired me, some of the labour, especially on the outside of the building, had to come from Europe to—fortunately, we are in bit of a different spot here. But it definitely will be a challenge. That's why this committee and the members who serve on it in the future will have to play a very important role, in addition to the ministry.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Are there any further questions from committee members?

Thank you very much, Minister. In our invitation letter, the committee indicated it does understand, as you had highlighted, that there may be topics of a sensitive nature for discussion and the committee is amenable to holding all or part of the meeting in closed session, if requested.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, if that's okay with colleagues, I'd like to present the next part of this in a closed session.

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** In that case, I would suggest that we move into closed session in order to continue our conversation with the minister on the work of the secretariat.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** You need a motion on that?

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Is everyone in agreement? Do we need a formal motion in this case? Okay. Then, as I declared, we will move into closed session. Thank you for the double-check.

*The committee recessed at 1346 and later continued in closed session.*







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