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Board of Internal Economy

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• (1140)

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Speaker of the House of Commons): Colleagues, welcome to meeting number 29 of the Board of Internal Economy.

I'd like to begin today's meeting with a reminder of best practices to follow when meeting with simultaneous interpretation in order to protect the health and safety of meeting participants.

We ask all participants to always keep their earpiece either on their ear or in the designated place on the table, away from the microphones. We also ask participants to avoid touching a live microphone, including the stand. We also ask them to keep a constant distance from the microphone when speaking, and to avoid adjusting the earpiece volume, especially to the maximum level, when close to a live microphone. In addition, when speaking, participants should speak slowly and clearly. Finally, when they are not speaking, their microphone should be switched off.

[English]

With that, let's proceed to the agenda. Let's start off the agenda with the minutes from the previous meeting.

Go ahead, Ms. Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (Chief Opposition Whip): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to note that where the minutes say, "Security Matters", the Conservatives did ask in that discussion that the House administration try to find offsetting savings in other areas. I think that should be mentioned in the minutes.

Hon. Greg Fergus: That's great. We can add that. Thank you.

Are there any other changes or modifications to the minutes? Seeing none, do we have approval for the minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Ms. Findlay. I see a consensus for that.

Item number two is business arising from previous minutes. Seeing none, we adopt that. Is there any dissent?

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Greg Fergus: That's good. I'm seeing none.

[Translation]

We'll move on to the third item on the agenda, which is the update on the LTVP working group.

I invite the Deputy Speaker of the House, Mr. Chris d'Entremont, to lead this discussion.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (Chair, Working Group on the LTVP and the Centre Block Rehabilitation, House of Commons): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Thank you so much, folks. It's good to see you once again.

As chair of the working group, I am back today on behalf of the working group to update the board on our recent meeting of February 9 and to bring forward recommendations and endorsement on the Block 2 and Confederation Building projects, the largest ones we're going to be discussing outside of Centre Block. This will be a short briefing, but it will allow the board to keep up with timely key decisions for the LTVP.

[Translation]

Block 2, as you may recall, is the redevelopment of the entire block across from Parliament Hill, bounded by Metcalfe, O'Connor, Wellington and Sparks streets. The redevelopment focuses on providing parliamentary space at either end of the block, with the east end for the Senate, and the west end for the House of Commons. At the centre of the block will be the Indigenous Peoples' Space, which is not currently part of the redevelopment project.

The space that will accommodate the House of Commons will initially serve as swing space for the rehabilitation of the Confederation Building. In the long term, it will provide the permanent space for population growth as outlined in the Fair Representation Act.

For these two separate but interrelated projects, we have two specific recommendations for the board's consideration and approval today, including endorsement of the Block 2 HoC core functional requirements, and endorsement to investigate a one-phase approach for the rehabilitation of the Confederation Building.

[English]

Following the architectural competition that reflected general requirements, a more thorough review of the core requirements has been completed. Considering the site capacity of Block 2 in the initial strategy of a two-phase rehabilitation of the Confederation Building, the following minimum core requirements for the House of Commons are proposed: 94 parliamentary office units, a secure entrance, a cafeteria, a connection to the Block 2 library at 125 Sparks and the Valour Building, an operational services area and a loading dock.

The working group recommends endorsement of the House of Commons core requirements, acknowledging that the program may evolve as further project planning continues for the Confederation rehabilitation program.

As overall project updates continue on the Block 2 project, PSPC has confirmed that the schematic design phase was initiated in the spring of 2023 and is now at 20%. It's planned to advance to 50% by July 2024. The construction management contract was awarded in January 2024, and some construction is planned to commence in September 2024.

[Translation]

With regard to the Confederation Building rehabilitation project, it is currently in the planning stages. The Confederation Building is the largest building in our inventory housing parliamentary office units and is currently at the end of its lifecycle and in need of a complete rehabilitation.

As mentioned, the PSPC plan that was approved in 2017 had envisioned the rehabilitation of the Confederation Building in multiple phases. The working group has been informed by PSPC that they have now identified an opportunity to rehabilitate this building in one phase, which represents a potential for significant cost and schedule savings.

The proposed advantages are a saving of approximately four years in project schedule; a potential significant cost reduction by avoiding sunk costs and off-hour premiums, reduced escalation and reduced risk allowance; and a reduction of occupant disruption and avoidance of multiple moves.

• (1145)

The LTVP working group agrees that the proposed single-phased approach would be advantageous, and it seeks the board's endorsement for the project team to proceed with investigating this option. This would entail returning to the working group and subsequently the board with the findings and options for the remainder of the swing space required to undertake the Confederation Building Rehabilitation project as a single phase.

[English]

In conclusion, I'd like to mention that the working group meets regularly and is very engaged in a detailed view of the issues on many of the items across the LTVP. We continue to be confident that requirements of parliamentarians are being taken into consideration.

We anticipate being able to update the board on the Block 2 design and the results of the Confederation Building investigation in the near future, as well as a number of other key LTVP project decisions.

I'd be happy to take any questions or elaborate on any of the information provided so that we can confirm the proposed endorsements. I also have Jennifer Garrett and Susan Kulba here to help me answer those questions if needed.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Chris.

I have two people on the list right now. I have Mr. MacKinnon, followed by Ms. Findlay and Mr. Julian.

Go ahead, Mr. MacKinnon.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. d'Entremont, thank you for your masterful guidance of the work of our group, in which we are proud to participate. I would also like to thank Ms. Kulba and Ms. Garrett for their dedication. I know that the project is progressing very well. We always look forward to hearing your updates on it.

I'm in favour of the plans that have been conveyed today, except for one element, which I believe is essential. I raised it during our discussions in the working group. My concern is about the temporary space where members will be housed while the Confederation Building is unavailable. I continue to believe that the members and their staff who will be displaced from the Confederation Building can be temporarily housed in Block 2, provided that the senators agree to stay for a certain period of time where they are, i.e., in the spaces surrounding the temporary Senate Building, while the work on the Confederation Building is completed. This would avoid having to move members much farther away, on Queen Street, into temporary spaces. We have to think about costs and, of course, the need for members to be close to Parliament Hill. I think that's an issue we'll have to resolve with the Senate, ultimately.

That aside, I recognize that savings may result from the one-phase plan to rehabilitate the Confederation Building. Of course, we look forward to further updates on Block 2, which, as everyone knows, will fill a gaping hole in the downtown core and be a source of pride for the entire Parliamentary Precinct.

• (1150)

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: I can say a few words about this.

Our priority always remains the members of the House. We want to make sure they have the opportunity to occupy offices over a long term. We don't want them to move too often in the future, once Block 2 is ready. We're going to do our best to negotiate with the Senate and make sure we have priority when it comes to this building.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Ms. Garrett, do you have a comment?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Garrett (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada): I would add that part of the key in achieving savings is in the timing in the Confederation rehabilitation. It's in a significant range, but a one-phase approach and finding appropriate swing space is the key to that strategy, and that will be part of the broader analysis that's brought forward and back to this committee ultimately for a decision.

We are leaving no stone unturned with the work that we're doing with both the House of Commons and the Senate administrations to determine what those options would be, and we're considering all options at this point. Then, once we have some viable options, we will proceed with the appropriate financial verifications to round out a final recommendation on a one- or two-phase strategy that we'll bring back, hopefully in the fall time frame.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted a clarification. You had a slide about the Confederation Building, and it referred to "MC2017". Does that mean "memo to cabinet 2017"? Is that what the reference is there, as opposed to a recommendation of this board?

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: Yes. Part of the structure that we have to go through in executing the long-term vision and plan is to get cabinet approval, so the "MC" reference in the documentation is a reference to a cabinet approval.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Was that back in 2017?

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: Yes.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Right.

Then this single-phase approach, which to me makes sense, would be less expensive and take a shorter amount of time, and we're talking about additional swing space in offices. I guess it led me to think, with the embracing of a hybrid workspace for the public service, that there may be offices available in less-occupied government office buildings that could be looked to for some of that additional swing space.

Is that part of your considerations?

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: The challenge with what we're facing is that Parliament has a very physical geographic location, so we have very tight geographical boundaries within which we want to make sure that you have office space and easy access, for example, for votes and things like that.

One of the challenges that we will have, quite honestly, with the Confederation swing space is finding viable swing space that makes sense for members of Parliament to get to where they need to go within the parliamentary precinct. There aren't a lot of government-owned spaces through that reduction program that are in that physical geographical area.

If there were flexibility on the part of the House of Commons to expand those GOS, those government-owned spaces, then perhaps, but right now the requirements we're working with are based on your parliamentary operational needs. The furthest we've gone to date is down to Queen Street.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I have one more more aspect, Mr. Chair.

I know that the gym in the Confederation Building is used by a lot of members. Are there some ideas for options for a replacement gym while that building is closed?

Ms. Susan Kulba (Director General and Executive Architect, Real Property, House of Commons): The intent is to replace the gym. We just don't have a location for it right now.

Ideally, we would like to make that gym available in a building that's occupied by MPs. That's on the next level of study. We'll come back with solutions for that.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you for all your hard work. I know that there have been a lot of long and detailed hours, so thank you to all of you for that.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Those were good questions.

Mr. Julian, you have the floor.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the New Democratic Party): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. d'Entremont, Ms. Kulba and Ms. Garrett, I thank all three of you and your teams for the work you have done.

How many rooms are currently being used as parliamentary offices at the Confederation Building?

[English]

Ms. Susan Kulba: There are approximately 160. It's one of the largest buildings that houses parliamentary office units.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: So that would really be a problem in the case of about 60 offices, for which nothing is planned at the moment.

The Senate has temporarily moved downtown, near the market, into the old Ottawa Central Station. Is it possible to negotiate with the Senate for them to take other offices, closer to the temporary Senate building, and for us to set up some offices in the Victoria Building? Is this something that has already been discussed or considered?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: I would say, in fairness—and I certainly do not want to speak for the Senate and their requirements—that we're in early days in studying what the one-phase strategy could look like in terms of those swing space options. It would be too early for me to deliberately say on any particular building what our strategy is.

What I can say is that we, along with the House of Commons and the Senate, have started coordinated discussions on all of those options, and all the buildings within the portfolio are being referenced and mentioned during those discussions.

Mr. Peter Julian: Okay. Thank you.

The other question I want to ask is around what was certainly a major challenge in the West Block renovation, which is asbestos. I'm presuming that it's going to be a problem with the Confederation Building.

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: We've yet to do detailed investigations on the quantities, but I think it's safe to say that we can be guaranteed that we're going to run into designated substances in a building of this age that will have to be remediated.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for that.

I support the recommendation of doing it in one phase because of that. It doesn't make sense, if we're talking about substances like asbestos that can cause major health problems, to try to phase in a renovation to the Confederation Building, so I certainly support the two recommendations and I look forward to further discussions when you come back to BOIE at a later date.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Scheer, you have the floor.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (House leader of the official opposition): I apologize for asking you to just walk me through it, hopefully simply.

Right now, with Block 2, if we do go with a one-phase approach, does Block 2 have enough capacity if the Senate doesn't have any usage of it? Is there enough space in Block 2 to accommodate everybody from the Confederation Building?

Hon. Greg Fergus: Ms. Garrett, please go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: It comes close to being able to accommodate everyone.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Okay. What are we talking about? I ask because I'm looking—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It's everyone except your office.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Yes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Andrew Scheer: If I have to end up back in Confed, I've done something wrong.

I'm just picturing a three-part move. If the Senate moves into Block 2 and some move from the Confederation Building into Block 2, and then we have to get a significant amount of swing space, it seems to me that if the senators are where they are now and they could accommodate us with a little bit more patience, we could avoid a great deal of real estate shopping and costs associated with that. I think we should have a minimal number of movements.

It's very expensive to pack things up and to negotiate leases. I think we should really not just look at it broadly but maybe crunch the numbers and say how much savings would be associated with continuing with the senators where they are, allowing everyone from Confed to go in with minimal swing space, if that is needed, and actually have some numbers we can compare and go to the Senate with and say, "Look, this would be a significant savings if we could do it this way."

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. d'Entremont, please go ahead.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: What I'll say to that one is that I think we at LTVP have an opportunity to look at that very closely. I have a really good team around me and good members, and some of the members on this board are actually on LTVP as well, so I think we should have that discussion there to make sure that we have the right numbers.

I think what you're proposing is well within our purview to try to figure out.

• (1200)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Okay.

Just to clarify, what I would be proposing is that a pretty meaningful study be done. It's not that we would spend a lot of money on the study, but we would pull out the calculators and do some kind of realistic cost-benefit analysis.

Thanks.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Perfect. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Bloc Québécois Whip): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

From the outset, I want to congratulate the two leaders of the project. I note that they are women, so I find it encouraging to see two women leading major renovations to the institution of Parliament. I congratulate them both.

At the Bloc Québécois, we will also support both proposals. That said, I'm also sympathetic to Mr. MacKinnon's argument against moving members' offices back toward Queen Street.

Ms. Garrett, the concern I have is mostly about security. As you know, the security services in the Parliamentary Precinct have expanded somewhat, following what we've experienced in recent weeks or months. In my opinion, the fact that MPs can be accommodated further away also implies the expansion of the area in which security officers provide services.

Is this something you've worked on, studied or explored? Have you looked at the question of security needs if we were to move members' offices back to Queen Street because the Senate would refuse to stay where they are now for a little while longer?

Hon. Greg Fergus: Who would like to answer this question?

Ms. Garrett, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: I...

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Ms. Garrett, can you answer me in the language in which I asked you the question? I'd be enormously grateful.

Ms. Jennifer Garrett: Yes, I will try to answer you in your language.

In the future, at least 50% of parliamentarians will work on Parliament Hill, on either side of Wellington Street. For this reason, we are always studying the situation and trying to find solutions to ensure the security of the Parliamentary Precinct. For each project, our strategy is to work with all the administrations involved to fully understand the security needs for each building, whether permanent or temporary, as is the case with the Senate, in order to protect all parliamentarians.

For the Senate, the strategy to date has been to consolidate its presence in the three permanent buildings. However, the construction phase for the Confederation Building requires us to study all our options.

At all times, safety is paramount to us and to our business.

Is that clear enough?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Yes. I wanted to congratulate you on your French and invite you to take advantage of your appearances before the Board of Internal Economy to practise it. That's how you'll improve. I greatly appreciate your efforts to respond to me in my language.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Ms. DeBellefeuille.

Mr. MacKinnon, the floor is yours.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Since everyone has made their point, I propose that we endorse what is proposed today, while reminding ourselves of the issue that has not yet been resolved. It seems more than logical to me that the Senate should agree to stay where it is. It has more than acceptable office space, and what's more, it's closer to the temporary Senate building than Block 2. I think it makes perfect sense to make this proposal. As for the work, I hope we can move forward.

• (1205)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Mr. MacKinnon. I couldn't agree with you more.

I think there's consensus on both of those things, with one caveat. Certainly, we will consider the points that were raised by Mr. Scheer, Ms. DeBellefeuille, Mr. Julian and Ms. Findlay.

Mr. d'Entremont, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: No, not really. Thank you very much.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Is there consensus, colleagues? I see nods.

(Motion agreed to)

Thank you very much.

We will now move on to item 4: professional development budgets and related policies. We have with us Paul St George, whom we all know very well, as well as Carolyn Evangelidis and José Fernandez.

Mr. St George, the floor is yours.

Mr. Paul St George (Chief Financial Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am addressing the Board of Internal Economy seeking authorization to update certain policies relating to the professional development of employees of members of Parliament, senior officers and members responsible for National Caucus research offices.

In December 2022, following a pilot project, the board approved the permanent establishment of development budgets for these employees.

Following consultations with caucuses, the administration is proposing policy changes, retroactive to April 1, 2024. The proposed changes will facilitate and support the development of these employees.

[English]

The proposed changes will further support employee access to professional development by expanding the eligibility of travel expenses, including those incurred for trainers. It will also allow expenses for group training organized by House officers and members responsible for national caucus research offices, and will also expand the eligibility to short-term employees.

In addition, there will be an expansion of the eligibility to employees who work for one or more members and are paid a minimum of 15 hours per week. Finally, it will provide access to travel resources to eligible employees travelling unaccompanied on special trips.

These policy changes would not require supplemental funding, as there is capacity within existing budgets.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my presentation, and we welcome any questions from the board.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Go ahead, Ms. Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just thinking that these services are somewhat underutilized. My understanding is that only about 16% of MPs take this up. I've been trying to encourage it in our own caucus. Some people seem to be well aware of the ability to access this, and others don't seem as aware. I've been trying to say that this is a way for your staff to get the training they need, etc.

Given that reality, are you able to provide or estimate a ballpark figure for how much money the House administration spends on administering all of the unique rules and elements of the professional development budgets?

I'm aware that less than \$300,000 was spent on actual claims, and I'm wondering what the ratio of the overhead and administration costs might be.

• (1210)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Go ahead, Mr. St George.

Mr. Paul St George: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you, Ms. Findlay, for the question.

We don't have a calculation specific to the cost from administration. What we do know through the costing that we have done over the last several months is that approximately 12% of overhead is related to administering services across the House of Commons. With this specific submission, what we plan on doing is minimizing man-hours to implement. For example, we're setting up specific codes within the system that would direct a member to select an expense, and that would guide that expense directly to the professional development budget.

We also have embedded within our system a control of those MOB's that are perhaps getting close to maximizing those budgets so that we can follow up with the members and ensure that there's some guidance or questions in terms of the eligibility, and whether or not it belongs in professional development or within the MOB.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I had one other question.

When we do our more common training, there were some issues, as I understand it, when people tried to go to their MOB to get that training covered for their staff, particularly when it came to common costs. I'm just wondering if you're looking at that issue of when larger training can be attributed to common costs under professional development—as opposed to specific—for the individuals who are accessing the training.

I just think we need a little more clarity so that when the MPs are looking to offset these costs for training—which makes sense and, as I say, in my view, is actually underutilized for what's available—they know where to go with their claims.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Go ahead, Mr. St George.

Mr. Paul St George: Absolutely, and it's something we'll take back to the administration for further analysis.

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Ms. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. St George, first of all, I'd like to congratulate you. I've read the entire Professional Development Budget documents, and I see that you've done a great deal of modernization work that takes into account the current regulations of the Members' Allowances and Services Manual.

In my opinion, every employer today must ensure the professional development of its employees and support them in this process, and this starts with the leadership of the boss. I also think that Bloc Québécois MPs have made a lot of use of this budget, which aims to support and develop employee skills. Our MPs are very keen on this budget because they strongly believe that supporting their staff in their development is a way of retaining them. So just because the budget isn't used does not mean it isn't useful.

Perhaps we should ask MPs with teams why they don't promote professional development to their staff and why, when they draw up their action plan at the beginning of the year, they don't consider it a priority.

I think that today, in 2024, training should be a priority for every boss. We know that, in his constituency office, the MP is the boss,

as is the chief of staff in his office. It's up to him to promote training and set up a program. In this sense, you have my full support.

I was present at the Board of Internal Economy meeting when Mr. Holland had proposed as a pilot project a \$5,000 off-budget fund for training. You could say that this project has been made permanent. It helps that it's off-budget, even if the way it's used is a bit rigid.

I'd like to say to my Conservative colleague that the figures she gave give us a good idea of how the \$5,000 fund is being used. However, we know that many constituency offices have incurred expenses related to training, which have not been charged to the \$5,000 off-budget item. In other words, it's possible to attend a training session for which travel expenses, per diems and all related costs have been charged to the MP's budget, rather than to the \$5,000 off-budget item. So it doesn't really give a complete picture of how the money set aside for training is being used.

With this in mind, Mr. St George, your proposal is much more flexible and interesting, as it offers a multitude of much less rigid possibilities, which will encourage MPs to organize group training sessions, even between neighbouring offices, for example. They can then charge travel expenses, fees and allowances to the appropriate budget. I'm convinced that, if the members of the board here have the same enthusiasm as I do and give you the opportunity to implement your changes, you'll present us with better results next year in terms of the rate of staff participation in training, as well as the amounts used in the budget set aside for this purpose.

So I'm very proud of you, because it was no small job you had to do. I want to congratulate you, your team and the Human Resources team for working well together to modernize and bring you up to date, while taking into account bylaws and human resources objectives and priorities. Thanks to public disclosure, everyone will be able to see that the management of each office's training expenditure will be easier and more transparent. So I'd like to congratulate you on your tremendous work.

I'm proud of you, and I hope I've been able to convince my Conservative colleague to accept your changes and your proposal, because they're really part of a trend of continuous improvement and support for the professional development of our teams.

• (1215)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

Mr. Julian, the floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. St George, I would like to say that I support the proposal as well, and I wanted to thank you for your work on it.

Professional development is absolutely fundamental for retaining the people who work for us and giving them a chance to build their skills. It also helps us provide a better level of service. The staff in my constituency office in New Westminster—Burnaby help more than 1,000 constituents a year with issues that can be extremely complex. Fortunately, every year my team has a chance to benefit from professional training, and they participate fully. We use those funds. My team has developed skills that help them provide a better level of service to the public.

This training is extremely important for retaining employees and providing better service. It is clearly successful, in my opinion. I think the proposal we are considering would provide better support and more opportunities to provide services to the public. I think it is extremely important for the government to work in the interests of the public. I am not the type of person who is in favour of cutting services. We really need to provide a better level of service, and professional training gives us the opportunity to do so.

Congratulations, and thank you for the proposal, which I fully support.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. St George, based on the very glowing comments about you and your team, I see that there is a consensus to adopt the four recommendations. We may want to come back to the issue of the cost of administering these training programs.

[*English*]

Very good. Congratulations for those four items.

Colleagues, we will now move on to number 5, which is the internal audit charter and audit, and the improvement plan and annual report for 2024.

We have Ms. Ruff with us today. She is our chief audit person.

Ms. Ruff, I turn it over to you.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jennifer Ruff (Chief Audit Executive, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm here today to present the 2024 internal audit charter and business plan for approval. I will also present the annual report for your information.

Basically, the internal audit function ensures the impartial review of internal systems, processes and procedures within the House administration to help the organization operate efficiently and effectively. The responsibilities and authorities that guide the function are set out in the internal audit charter.

There have been some minor changes to the charter this year to better reflect the new professional standards of the Institute of Internal Auditors. The biggest change was to clarify the board's role in approving the charter and audit plan.

The business plan for 2024-25 describes the engagements we have chosen based on a risk analysis. They reflect the administration's priorities. This year, we are aiming for a travel assurance engagement, a procurement compliance audit and a review of the client care team.

[*English*]

Finally, the annual report, which covers the 2023-24 fiscal year, highlights our most recent assurance engagement on overtime, the objective of which was to assure that internal controls were in place and working effectively with respect to overtime transactions. As well, the report summarizes the results of the follow-up on management actions to address previously completed engagements.

Given the results of these engagements, as described in the report, there are no significant issues or risks at this time that require the attention of the board.

I welcome any questions the board may have.

Thank you.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Are there questions and commentary, colleagues?

Seeing none, I thank you very much, Ms. Ruff. Congratulations.

[*Translation*]

It seems as though there are no questions.

Thank you.

[*English*]

We'll now move to the closed in camera session. We'll just take a couple of minutes to switch over.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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