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• (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)): Good morning. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 26 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee is meeting today, in the first hour, to continue its work on the operational security of the parliamentary precinct along Wellington Street and Spark Street. In the second hour, the committee will move to clause-by-clause on Bill C-14.

Before we proceed, I would like to propose to committee members a way forward for today, considering that there are votes in the House of Commons this morning.

I would like to propose that during the half-hour bells, which should start in about 15 minutes, we spend 20 to 25 minutes continuing with the witnesses, so that we don't have to call them back. That would also provide you with 5 to 10 minutes to get to the House to be there for the question to be called and to vote.

As for the current rules, after the vote, you would have up to 10 minutes to come back to committee. That would probably bring us to about 12:05, if everything is on time, as I hope it will be. We could then proceed with clause-by-clause, as we had anticipated.

That is the proposal I would like to put forward.

Is there anyone concerned with this proposal?

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Chair, we were just working out our speaking order.

Can you clarify your proposed approach again, really briefly?

The Chair: We would continue with our meeting this morning and spend about 20 to 25 minutes max of the 30-minute bells with witnesses. We can then leave, go to vote, and come back. When we all return, up to 10 minutes after the vote is complete, we would proceed with clause-by-clause.

Mr. Brad Vis: That's a reasonable approach, giving us time to go to the chamber to vote and to return.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

I would like to welcome the following witnesses for the first hour.

We have Steve Kanellakos, city manager, City of Ottawa; and Renée Amilcar, general manager, transit services department. From the National Capital Commission, we have Tobi Nussbaum, chief executive officer. He is accompanied by Alain Miguez.

[*Translation*]

And last, we have Patrick Leclerc, from the Société de transport de l'Outaouais. Mr. Leclerc is accompanied by Alain Tremblay.

I'm going to ask all the witnesses to keep their presentations to three minutes or less, if possible.

We will start with Mr. Kanellakos.

Welcome, Mr. Kanellakos.

The floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos (City Manager, City of Ottawa): Good morning, committee members.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a perspective on city facilities around the parliamentary precinct.

With me today is Ms. Renée Amilcar, the City of Ottawa's general manager of transit services, who will deliver remarks specifically on the transit operations in this area.

I'd like to begin my remarks with some background facts.

As you know, Wellington Street is a highly recognizable and iconic street in the city of Ottawa. It's a very valuable asset and is used by residents from both sides of the Ottawa River and by millions of tourists who visit the nation's capital every year. It's a major arterial road that connects Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway and the Portage Bridge, with about 56,000 motorists—that's pre-COVID—travelling on an average day through that intersection to Rideau Street and Sussex Drive. It connects to one of five interprovincial bridges linking Gatineau and Ottawa, specifically the Portage Bridge, where 19,500 vehicles cross daily. Since February 2022, Wellington Street has been temporarily closed between Bank Street and Elgin Street, whereby approximately 19,500 daily motorists have had to find a new route to get across this section of the city.

In terms of the future plans for Wellington Street, following the illegal occupation in February, city council directed staff to initiate discussions with federal officials regarding the future function of that road, as well as the potential to transfer ownership. Those discussions are under way with representatives of Public Services and Procurement Canada, who've expressed in the past a federal interest in taking over the street, and potentially other streets, for a more cohesive management of federal assets in the precinct.

It is expected that these investigative discussions will take some time to conclude, as there are many issues to consider, such as the impact on traffic circulation through the downtown, and how those impacts will be mitigated; access to the city's existing underground infrastructure for asset management; securing Wellington as one of the key corridors in the city's wider cycling network, for which considerable investments have been made by the city; and not least of all is the assessment of the real estate value of Wellington Street.

At this time, the only road contemplated for full closure is Wellington Street east of Bank and Elgin Street. Today, we will also hear from the City of Gatineau and STO on their tramway project, which will cross into Ottawa. In 2020, city council approved Wellington Street as one of two corridors for the STO to study in their next phase of tramway planning. The council's preferred option is a tunnel under Sparks Street, which has many transit and operational benefits and a potential for better integration with Ottawa's Confederation Line, which means more convenience for transit customers on both sides of the river. However, the Sparks Street tunnel has a higher capital cost than the Wellington Street surface option even though this tramway will be serving generations to come.

For Sparks Street, the city has a public realm plan that council approved in 2019. This pedestrian mall is of significant interest to many organizations. It's owned by the city, but it's managed by the Sparks Street Mall Authority, programmed in part by the Sparks Street BIA and surrounded by properties owned or leased by PSPC, the NCC and others. The high-profile Sparks Street public realm plan was developed with many stakeholders and was intended to inform long-term planning exercises for the parliamentary precinct.

Finally, in the area, the city is also reviewing the Rideau-Sussex-Colonel By node to improve mobility for all users and create a better public space for this significant downtown intersection.

In closing, as you can appreciate, there are many complex issues and public space projects that have been established within and around the parliamentary precinct. Continued collaboration between the city and federal officials will be critical for successful outcomes moving forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move on to Renée Amilcar.

Welcome to PROC.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Renée Amilcar (General Manager, Transit Services Department, City of Ottawa): Good afternoon everyone.

I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to address the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

My name is Renée Amilcar and I am the General Manager of the City of Ottawa's Transit Services Department.

We operate OC Transpo, Ottawa's public transit system, which includes diesel and electric buses, our light rail system and Para Transpo. Every day, OC Transpo keeps the city moving and provides important connections to and from Gatineau.

As you look into expanding the parliamentary precinct to include sections of Wellington Street and Sparks Street, I ask that the committee consider three key issues affecting transit users.

These issues are important because we want to ensure that OC Transpo can maintain current service levels and that transit riders are not negatively affected.

First, we want OC Transpo and the Société de transport de l'Outaouais, or STO, to be able to continue operating along Wellington Street and beyond Sparks Street as we do today. This includes keeping bus stops and shelters at their current locations, at least until the future STO streetcar line is built.

Transit service along Wellington Street is vital for many of our customers who live and work on both sides of the Ottawa River. Access to this street also allows us to efficiently pick up and drop off Para Transpo riders. Changing routes and bus stop locations or forcing Para Transpo riders to be dropped off farther from their destinations would disadvantage our customers.

Second, we want to see the plans for the STO streetcar line, either along Wellington Street, under Sparks Street, or any other future location, go ahead and not be affected by the expansion of the parliamentary precinct.

Third, we would like OC Transpo and STO to continue to be allowed to detour buses along Wellington and Sparks Streets in the event of any future external influences, such as emergencies, without having to obtain approval from the National Capital Commission or any other agency to use federal lands.

Unplanned detours are complex and resource intensive. Adding another layer of approvals could have a significant impact on service reliability for our riders and disadvantage residents who rely on public transit.

As you can appreciate, it is important to implement detours in a timely and safe manner when necessary to ensure that our customers can easily get where they need to go.

This concludes my remarks.

Once again, thank you for inviting me to speak.

● (1110)

The Chair: And thank you, Ms. Amilcar.

Tobi Nussbaum, the floor is yours.

Mr. Tobi Nussbaum (Chief Executive Officer, National Capital Commission): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

I am pleased to be here today. With me is Alain Miguez, Vice-President, Capital Planning.

[*English*]

I have the pleasure of leading the NCC, a federal crown corporation with a mandate to build a dynamic, sustainable and inspiring capital that is a source of pride for all Canadians. This mandate is relevant to the committee's work on the parliamentary precinct and the future of Wellington Street.

In particular, from a geographic perspective, what's important is the NCC's management of Confederation Boulevard, recognized by the wide sidewalks with red granite, which offers visitors to the capital a guidepost to important sites in the core. That includes the loop from Parliament, west along Wellington Street past the judicial precinct, over the Portage Bridge, east along Laurier Avenue in Gatineau to the Canadian Museum of History, back across Alexandra Bridge, passing along the National Gallery and returning alongside Major's Hill Park.

Further relevant context for the NCC in these discussions is the recent creation of an interprovincial transit project office within the NCC, as announced by the government in budget 2021, to help advance the Société de transport de l'Outaouais tramway project, which has already been mentioned.

Reimagining this stretch of Wellington Street in front of Parliament, including as the alignment for a potential future capital transit loop between Gatineau and Ottawa, could occur in the context of a number of ambitious capital building projects currently under way, including, of course, the restoration of the parliamentary buildings themselves.

[*Translation*]

To the east, Nepean Point, which offers a spectacular view of the Ottawa River, is being revitalized and will be connected with Major's Hill Park by a new pedestrian bridge.

Better connections between the rocky escarpment west of Parliament and the river below will be part of an ambitious plan for re-

newable energies. That plan is led by our partner, Public Services and Procurement Canada.

● (1115)

[*English*]

Connecting across the river, the beloved but failing Alexandra Bridge will be replaced, showing off the best of modern engineering and architecture, and offering viewpoints to take in the sites to really reinforce the interprovincial character of the capital.

It is clear that the transfer of Wellington Street to the federal jurisdiction offers the opportunity to rethink the use of this important space for people visiting the capital, for gathering in peaceful protest, and for better public transit and active transportation links in the capital.

[*Translation*]

This change of jurisdiction would help to mitigate risks relating to the safety of this essential infrastructure, while guaranteeing a common vision of public connectivity and access to our democratic institutions.

[*English*]

For our part, the NCC is committed to working with its federal partners to ensure safe public access to the roadway and surroundings, while also ensuring the respect of its ceremonial value to Canada's capital.

We feel confident that together we can harness our ambition and investment, and build a more beautiful, inviting and resilient space in the heart of Canada's capital.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to Patrick Leclerc.

[*Translation*]

Welcome.

Mr. Patrick Leclerc (General Manager, Société de transport de l'Outaouais): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the committee members for inviting me to appear before the committee.

My name is Patrick Leclerc, and I am the General Manager of the Société de transport de l'Outaouais. With me is my colleague Alain Tremblay, Project Office Manager, Tramway Gatineau-Ottawa.

For over 10 years, the STO, in collaboration with several partners, including Public Services and Procurement Canada, the National Capital Commission, the City of Ottawa and Ville de Gatineau, has been studying and developing a dedicated public transit system that would link both sides of the river in our region. The challenges of connecting two provinces, two cities, including Canada's capital, and two public transit systems, very likely make this future transportation project one of the most complex in Canada.

Without a doubt, these challenges add up, but they are greatly surpassed by the benefits expected in terms of mobility between the two cities, redesign of the urban space and safety around the parliamentary precinct.

At this point, we are still looking at two options for the tram's insertion into downtown Ottawa. For today's purposes, I will focus on the at-grade insertion of the tram on Wellington Street. As you will see, this is quite an interesting solution from several points of view.

To begin with, this is far more than a transportation project: it is an opportunity to revitalize the heart of the nation's capital. The tram's insertion on Wellington would involve significant urban redevelopment, enabling active transportation and public transit modes to safely co-exist. The plans also include a public space conducive to official events and ceremonies, urban design and landscaping that will create an inviting public environment only steps from Canada's Parliament and nearby businesses and residential neighbourhoods. Three stations are planned to meet transit riders' needs and to align with the OC Transpo system.

Expanding the pedestrian perimeter on Wellington Street will also improve the safety aspect for everyone. Here, I am referring to residents, merchants, workers, pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users, tourists and, of course, dignitaries visiting the Parliament buildings. The next steps in the project involve an in-depth analysis of the access points to the parliamentary precinct to ensure safe and fluid traffic.

Because of its frequency and high capacity, we are confident that the tram will encourage more people to use public transit, which in turn will significantly reduce the number of cars in the downtown. The STO will also review its current service offer and reduce the number of buses crossing to Ottawa. This significant reduction in the number of vehicles will enhance both the safety and fluidity of traffic in the heart of the nation's capital.

There is no denying that the national capital region is expanding, and that transportation needs are constantly growing. The Gatineau-Ottawa tramway project will be able to meet those needs, well beyond the next 30 to 50 years. From an environmental point of view, the tram will be able to accelerate the shift from solo driving to public transit. It will also be an invaluable asset in achieving ambitious greenhouse gas, or GHG, emission reduction targets set by municipalities and other levels of government.

And with that, Madam Chair, I conclude my testimony.

Thank you for giving me this splendid opportunity.

I will be happy to answer committee members' questions.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments.

Once again, welcome, everyone.

[*English*]

I will ask that when the bells begin in the House of Commons, the TV be turned on, but be silent, so that all members are aware of the situation in the House.

We will get through one round of questions. I'm going to change the six-minute rounds to five-minute rounds, so that we can be respectful of the time and all of our duties.

We will start with Mr. McCauley, followed by Mr. Naqvi.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau and Ms. Blaney will have the floor next.

● (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Thanks, Madam Chair.

Through you, please, to Mr. Kanellakos, are you aware of whether anyone in the Ottawa Police Service requested that the government invoke the Emergencies Act?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Thank you for that.

I am not aware of anyone at Ottawa Police specifically requesting the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks.

On February 3, Councillor McKenney wrote to the commissioner of the RCMP, quoting an official request asking for the RCMP to assume policing responsibilities.

Was that on behalf of the administration, on behalf of the mayor, officially on behalf of city council or was this on her own behalf?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Councillor McKenney was acting on her own behalf as an individual councillor representing one of wards the most impacted by the protest.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It wasn't an official request on behalf of the city or anyone else.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: It was not.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chair, through you, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] again back to you, sir.

How much does the City of Ottawa receive from the Government of Canada under the payments in lieu of taxes program?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I don't have that number off the top of my head. I'm sorry.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Would you be able to give a ballpark?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No, I don't want to guess. I just can't remember the number because I've been immersed in a lot of numbers lately and it's just not coming to me. I'm sorry.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Maybe you can provide it back to the committee. I assume it's a significant amount.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: It is a significant amount. It's in the tens of millions of dollars, for sure.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: With respect to that, with the proposed changes being talked about with the parliamentary precinct, do you know how much is attributable to federal buildings in the Queen Street area lying between the Rideau Canal and Kent Street?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No, I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I don't have that specific information, but I can get it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay.

If the city transfers ownership responsibility of parts of downtown, would they be giving up that revenue from the government?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: They would not necessarily because the buildings are still owned by the federal government. We receive payments in lieu of taxes. There has been a change recently because of provincial legislation, which is actually reducing the amount of money that the federal government will be providing. I know that number. It's about \$13 million a year less that we would be receiving from the federal government because of a tax class change that the provincial government has made, which inadvertently has affected us.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks. I'm going to move on to a couple of last, quick questions.

A previous witness from the business improvement area on Bank Street had commented that they're not keen on, and oppose the idea of, further shutting down streets to traffic.

Has the city done a study on the financial implications for those businesses or other businesses in the area if these changes are made?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: It has not yet.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is it being planned? Is this going to happen soon or...?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I don't have any plans to do that at this point. That was a point raised by the executive director of the BIA. We have not looked at that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay.

We heard this week that the Treasury Board and the government have no plans set for public service workers to return to work in the buildings in the core.

Has the city done a financial implications study on what happens to businesses, taxes and tax base if these workers do not return to the buildings in the downtown core?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: It has not specifically, no.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is it a concern to the city or to the businesses that you've spoken with?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: It's our downtown and the number of people downtown supporting businesses is a significant concern to the city.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How much time do I have, Madam Chair?

Quickly, I'm wondering if you've been wandering around downtown at all. Unfortunately, Ottawa, much like Edmonton and a lot of the major cities, is seeing a huge uptick in violent crime, petty crime, homelessness and drug use.

Is that a concern to the city that we're not getting the people back into work in the offices downtown?

• (1125)

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: The City of Ottawa is very concerned about not having people coming back to downtown to what it was pre-pandemic because it has an impact on, as you say, a number of things like businesses, etc.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Has the city reached out or written to the government at all expressing these concerns officially?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I believe we have. Our mayor has written to the Prime Minister and to Treasury Board asking for a quicker return and a larger return of employees back to the public service.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Great. Thank you, sir.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for that exchange.

I will confirm that bells have just started.

Mr. Naqvi, you have five minutes.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Through you, I will start with Mr. Kanellakos.

First, just very quickly, during the occupation, is my understanding correct that the city and the Ottawa police were seeking support and resources from the federal government and were able to effectively use the invocation of the Emergencies Act to put an end to the occupation?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: We were seeking resources, and we did use the act to put an end to the occupation.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The orders under the Emergencies Act provided the kinds of powers that the Ottawa police and the city needed to effectively manage the occupation and put an end to it. Am I correct?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: You are correct. At that point of the occupation, those powers were very beneficial.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Great. Thank you very much.

With regard to the future of Wellington Street, Mr. Kanellakos, you mentioned in your remarks that conversations have started with the federal government. Can you provide a little more detail in terms of the nature of those conversations at this moment?

If the NCC was involved in the conversations, perhaps Mr. Nussbaum can add something to that as well.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Madam Chair, the last conversation was about two months ago. Right now, I believe the PSPC and the NCC are discussing who is going to be the lead on it. I'll defer to Mr. Nussbaum on that one.

The discussion is capturing and starting to frame many of the things I outlined in my opening comments.

Mr. Tobin Nussbaum: I'd be happy to add to that, Madam Chair.

It is true that we are engaged with PSPC on a discussion to make sure that we have a full scope of all of the issues that need to be raised. The hope is that we can engage the City of Ottawa soon on some of the details that have been discussed so far.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

Through you, Madam Chair, I want to thank Mr. Nussbaum for recently, in co-operation with the City of Ottawa, putting planters on both the Elgin and Bank sides of Wellington Street so that we can beautify the closure, as opposed to having ugly barriers. I'd like to thank him very much for that particular action.

Mr. Nussbaum, does the NCC support the closure of Wellington Street and making it more part of an active transportation route, connecting it to some of the various routes that the NCC and the City of Ottawa are developing around the downtown core?

Mr. Tobin Nussbaum: Yes. I think we have a very open mind. We see a lot of advantages to focusing that portion of Wellington Street on, of course, service vehicles for Parliament Hill, public transportation and active transportation. At the same time, we do recognize that some data, such as traffic studies and so on, still needs to be collected and better understood.

I think it's fair to say that we have a very open mind and are positively inclined towards a rethink of how that space can work.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

Through you, Madam Chair, I have a question for Ms. Amilcar on transit routes for both OC Transpo and STO.

Since Wellington Street is closed right now, how are the detours working out in terms of the stops used by customers, etc?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Renée Amilcar: Thank you for the question.

Bus route number 15 uses the section of Wellington Street that is currently closed. So there is a detour now and we have informed our customers. So route number 15 is still running.

Normally, bus route number 17 uses Wellington Street. However, during the pandemic, we suspended that route. It should be returned to service at some point.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Have you seen an increase in the use of the light rail train system as a result of some of these routes being detoured or suspended?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Renée Amilcar: We haven't seen an increase in use of the light rail train, since federal employees have not yet gone back in the city. So ridership is still very low, and this has a major impact on ridership on our Wellington Street buses.

[*English*]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Okay.

Mr. Kanellakos, you talked about the volume of motor vehicles on Wellington Street. This information may not be available, but I wonder if data could be shared on accident rates, injuries or fatali-

ties, if any, on Wellington Street due to vehicular traffic. Could you provide that for the benefit of this committee?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes, we'd be happy to provide that to the committee. We have that data.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, the floor is yours.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to summarize our work and see where we are. The objective of our committee is to identify the potential benefits of expanding the federal jurisdiction for the security of parliamentarians to a larger perimeter than it currently takes in. The previous questions from my colleagues were very interesting. I'm going to have to ask different questions, because they have really done good work this morning. That's good, because we have less time than anticipated.

My first question will be for Mr. Nussbaum.

Mr. Nussbaum, I would like you to tell us about prioritizing. One thing that has been discussed is the rail loop, which is a very interesting project. However, I'd like to know what steps have to be followed that we should include in the report on security and sound management of the process.

Mr. Tobin Nussbaum: Thank you for the question.

I'm going to ask my colleague Alain Miguélez to answer it.

Mr. Alain Miguélez (Vice-President, Capital Planning, National Capital Commission): Thank you.

We are working with STO to be prepared, as the federal family. First, we are going to do feasibility studies that will have both an Ontario component that includes Ottawa and the Portage Bridge and a Quebec component.

The study stage will lead to a construction project, which will be the implementation phase. This will be the implementation of an initial phase to have the Ottawa-Gatineau streetcar line go along the Ontario side of the river from its two Gatineau branches and end up near the intersection of Elgin and Wellington Streets.

As well, the National Capital Commission has the mandate to study a subsequent phase for which there is no funding or funding applications at this time, but it would close the loop. It would mean having the streetcar line continue over the Alexandra Bridge back to the Quebec side of the river in the National Capital Region to close the loop in the downtown area.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

As you know, we have heard from witnesses who belong to the Algonquin community. We saw in their testimony a need for that community to have inclusion and access. We were even given an explanation of the right to settle and to demonstrate.

Where are you in your talks with the Algonquin community?

• (1135)

Mr. Alain Miguélez: We are fully aware of the need to include the Algonquin community. In fact, we are doing that at present in connection with our discussions about replacing the Alexandra Bridge. As well, the streetcar line crosses the Portage Bridge and Victoria Island, which is a very important symbolic place for the Algonquin nation. We have incorporated very close consultations with the Algonquin nation into our approach.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

I'm now going to ask the City of Ottawa representatives a question.

Madam Chair, I will ask them the question through you.

We have seen plans regarding the rail loop. It's a very original urban planning idea and I think it's quite exciting.

However, what we are thinking about is security. Obviously, a footbridge is one thing, but a streetcar line brings a lot of passenger traffic.

How can you assure us that it's possible to orchestrate everything, keeping in mind the objective having to do with parliamentarians' security?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Madam Chair, that's a very relevant question. Unfortunately, though, those technical difficulties the member presented have not yet been analyzed. That's part of the work that's going to be happening in the future with the studies we'll be undertaking.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Chair, I'm going to ask the City of Ottawa representatives another question.

Were you involved in the preparation ahead of the convoy arriving? Were you aware of the convoy arriving?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. The audio broke up at the very end. My apologies.

The Chair: Lucky you—it's actually a question for Mr. Leclerc.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Patrick Leclerc: In terms of the security component, including a streetcar line and closing Wellington Street between Bank and Elgin Streets makes it possible to remove vehicles, particularly private cars. Of course, the effect of that is to improve security, and that's also what we have observed in the other cities. A streetcar line is fixed and is relatively visible, and it goes by at much longer intervals than all the vehicles driving by. As a result, it improves security.

Concerning security west of Bank Street, the studies refer, among other things, to a pedestrian tunnel to handle crossings at the various intersections. That is how we plan to mitigate the risk. However, as was mentioned earlier, that aspect will be addressed in the pre-project analyses that are to begin once the funding is granted by the governments.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Blaney, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Of course, as always, through you, I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here.

I have a few questions, and I know we then have to head out to vote.

My first question will be for both the City of Ottawa and the STO.

I'm from British Columbia. In Vancouver, we saw a lot of business increase downtown when they made it more cycle- and transit-friendly. We know that a lot of businesses in the area were very concerned that their businesses would suffer, but they actually found the reverse.

I'm just wondering if the city or STO has done any work or research on the impact on businesses and tourism if the streets are closed to car traffic and on how to move forward with changing that whole energy equation of being so car-centric—which is so important, especially with GHGs—and transitioning to a more friendly way of travelling. I'm just wondering if there's any work that's been done on that.

I'll go to the city first.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Thank you. I was just going to ask if it's directed to the city first.

Active transportation is something that the city is very supportive of. Our council is pushing very much for this, and it's in our strategic plans, but we need a balanced network. The way the city operates, in our view, it just can't be pushed to one versus the other. It needs to be balanced. That's the challenge with this particular corridor.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Do you have anything to add, STO?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Patrick Leclerc: On the issue of return on investments, we know that investments in public transit have a three to one ratio. In other words, for every dollar invested, we get three dollars back. That ratio is not the same for investments in road development.

For example, regarding Sparks and Wellington Streets and downtown Gatineau, the return will be defined in subsequent steps, to determine what the economic benefits will be, locally.

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you for that, but the other part that is important, as was mentioned by STO earlier, is the idea of security. What we saw profoundly during the convoy was a huge concern about threats to our Parliament, to the very foundation of our democracy in Canada.

It sounds like there's an exploration of either going along Wellington or under Sparks Street. What I'm curious about—I'll ask the city first and come back to STO as well—is just what is the analysis process of how to keep people safe, knowing that we're bringing people to the capital, where the foundation of our democracy is. How are we going to ensure that process is as safe as possible and that we don't create risk, both for this place and for the people who would be using that transit?

The last question I have—this will go to the city, and then I'll stop talking—is about the fact that we know that parts of Wellington are blocked off right now. I see in this testimony that there's a request to be able to use that space. Are there any major complaints about that space being blocked off right now, bringing forward any concerns for the city or for the people who use transit?

Those are my two questions.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: On the first question, as I said in my remarks, city council does prefer the tunnel option under Sparks Street, but it is a very expensive option, so it did direct that we pursue the second choice, which is a tramway on the surface. However, those studies have yet to be done.

On the second question, the closure of Wellington Street certainly has brought some complaints. It has disrupted the historic traffic flow. Mind you, it's not as heavy as it was prepandemic, but it has disrupted the historic traffic flow.

People are adjusting, and you're seeing some of those impacts in other side streets, off-streets, in various modes of transportation because of that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Can I just add one part? One of the questions I was asking was specifically about security. As you are studying both the tunnel and the tramway, is security for people and the capital an essential part of the study?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Security has always been an issue for Wellington Street, but right now it's an exponential concern after what happened last February, and in my view, it will be considered as part of that.

[Translation]

Mr. Patrick Leclerc: We are really stressing the security component, and we were doing this even before the demonstrations that took place in Ottawa. We're working with the specialized security services for everything relating to putting the streetcar line on Wellington Street, for example. For the location of stations, we are taking security into account. For example, I'm thinking of the Langevin Building and the place where vehicles heading for Parliament Hill are inspected. For access to the judicial precinct and the parliamentary precinct, we are working with the security services. That entire component will therefore be handled by experts. The

same is true for the component involving putting the tunnel in. We have to think about that.

I'm going to mention one last factor relating to security.

In previous years, there were concerns about explosives being shipped on board rail vehicles. However, what we have seen a lot of in recent years is the use of trucks as rams. That is where security becomes a major issue. It is easier to provide security for a vehicle or a streetcar line than for the thousands of vehicles that drive by the parliamentary precinct.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much for that exchange.

On behalf of PROC committee members, I would like to thank all of the witnesses for taking the time to be here with us today. Should something come to mind that you would like to share with members, I would encourage you to share it with the clerk, so that it can be circulated. I like to believe that the PROC committee is the most watched committee of all the committees, so I'm sure this is very invigorating. If something comes up, please do send it to us, so that we can consider it.

With that, I hope all of you have a good day and that you keep well and safe.

For committee members, you all know that this is the last group of witnesses that we had appearing for this study. We are coming close to the summer adjournment, so I'm guessing... We've not had time to talk about recommendations, but perhaps I'll propose a summary of testimony for us to have available, and then we can see where the committee would go from there. We don't need to decide on that now, but ponder it perhaps among your teams.

Is that a briefing note we want analysts to compile, so that we can then come together to look at whether we are making a recommendation or not, so that work can continue?

The second thing, before we go to vote, the clerk had circulated a study budget for Bill C-14, and if there are no issues with it, we would like to see that approved. It was primarily for headsets, and so forth.

Excellent. We'll see you after the vote, and we will then proceed with clause-by-clause of Bill C-14.

Thank you all.

• (1145)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: I would like to resume the meeting. For the second part of our meeting we are conducting clause-by-clause of Bill C-14. Should members have any technical questions about the clauses of the bill, officials from the Privy Council Office and Elections Canada are present to provide answers as we move through the bill.

We have Robert Sampson here, the general counsel and senior director, legal services from Elections Canada, accompanied by Pierre Desjardins, senior director, electoral redistribution. From the Privy Council Office, we have Rachel Pereira, director, democratic institutions, as well as Nicholas MacDonald, legal counsel, legal services sector. I'm also excited to share that we have a legislative clerk with us, Mr. Jacques Maziade to guide us through the process.

With that, pursuant to Standing Order 75.1, consideration of clause 1, the alternative title, is postponed.

(On clause 2)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: So I'll ask Mr. Therrien whether he would like to propose his amendment. However, I want to inform all members that there is a good chance my decision has already been made.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): You are not taking my power of persuasion into account, Madam Chair, and you may change your mind.

This will come as no surprise to anyone. I would like to propose an amendment to Bill C-14. You should all have received the text of the amendment in both languages.

I propose that clause 2 of Bill C-14 be amended by adding the following after line 14, page 1:

(2) Subsection 51(1) of the Act is amended by adding the following after rule 4:

4.1 After the application of rules 1 and 2 and section 51A, there shall in respect of Quebec be added any additional members needed so that, after the completion of the readjustment, the total number of members for that province is not less than 25% of the total number of members in the House of Commons.

You have already heard my speech about this. I am just going to summarize my comments, which pretty much cover the subject.

First, this amendment is fundamental and necessary to protect Quebec's political weight. Quebec is a nation. Some will say it is a distinct society, but everyone agrees that there is a specificity that must be protected both for Quebec and for Quebecers: the fact that we are under constant threat because of factors associated with Quebec's unique geographic features. I'm not talking about a threat in the sense of aggression, meaning that we are mistreated. What I mean is that we are in a situation that makes the continued existence of our nation problematic. For that reason, among others, we are asking for a guarantee that 25% will be a minimum to be retained until Quebec is independent, probably.

It's necessary to guarantee that minimum because Quebec must be properly represented in Ottawa. Some people have argued that this could apply equally to Alberta or British Columbia, for example. The House of Commons has assigned the "nation" label to Quebec. We asked it, by way of a motion, to recognize not only the existence of a Quebec nation, but also the fact that French is the common language. A very large majority of members—I don't have the figures at hand—voted in favour of that motion.

Words have to have meaning. That is parliamentarianism. We don't stop talking, but we also act. We develop bills that come out of our discussions and the considerations we bring before the

House. It has to be visible. We have to put our money where our mouths are.

As well, we proposed a motion in the House of Commons in March 2022, which I will summarize very simply. The aim of the motion was to amend two items relating to electoral maps. First, it sought to reject any scenario that would result in Quebec losing members. You are familiar with the history: since 1966, no province has lost members. But after the calculations done by Elections Canada concerning the assignment of seats, we saw that the number of members had dropped from 78 to 77. That was unacceptable, and we said so. Second, the motion went further and stated that the political weight of Quebec in the House of Commons must not be allowed to be reduced.

I could have cited figures for you, because they are available. I will simply say that over the years, the number of seats in the House of Commons assigned to Quebec has gone from 33% of the total number of seats to about 23%, and that percentage is continuing to decline. Even if we take what Bill C-14 is proposing into account, Quebec's political weight will decline, despite the fact that the number of members will be kept at 78.

A constitutional expert, in fact the only one, testified before the committee and told us that we didn't need the agreement of seven provinces representing 50% of the population to make this change.

The minister defended himself at length on this subject. I can't quote his words exactly, and I don't want to misrepresent them. In any event, I have too much respect for the intelligence of committee members to start saying just anything. However, it seems to me that I heard him say that since this issue applied to only one province, Parliament could not make the change without the agreement of seven provinces representing 50% of the population. He added that Parliament did not have the power to act in this situation, and that he had therefore ruled this out from the start. I think I have summarized his comments properly.

Patrick Taillon, the constitutionalist, told us at the same meeting that we could make this change without amending the Constitution, since any amendment to the Constitution had to be with the agreement of seven provinces representing 50% of the population. He is the only expert who appeared here to offer an explanation on this subject and answer our questions.

Right off, I will tell you that this carries considerable weight. The minister mentioned two other people. I would have liked to meet them, those people, and talk with them.

• (1225)

There's a difference between writing an opinion and defending the opinion before the committee, whether virtually or in person.

I'm not saying there was a lack of organization; I'm stating the facts. He is the only constitutional expert who came here.

As well, that constitutional expert went further and stated that Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons had atrophied. That is very disturbing going forward. It is another fact that we must not ignore.

I am finishing, Madam Chair, but I really want to do things properly, because this is an extremely important issue for Quebeckers.

At the last meeting, I talked about what had opened the door to adding clauses to a constitutional text, and I will repeat that. Since 1987, the courts have recognized that exceptions exist to ensure effective representation and that Parliament has the power to adopt measures for that purpose.

I'm going to mention a few facts. In 1987, this issue was taken before the British Columbia courts. The Supreme Court recognized the fundamental principle of effective representation as a right guaranteed to electors by the charter. Effective representation includes two conditions. First, there must be relative equality, so that the weight of an elector's vote is not disproportionate in relation to another elector's.

Mr. Vis mentioned that at the last meeting, correctly, and wondered why his vote would count for less than another elector's elsewhere. As a general rule, that principle is accepted, but there are times when an individual's political weight changes somewhat, although not astronomically. This isn't about doubling or tripling the number of members for a province. In a case like that, what Mr. Vis said would have been really very important.

In the case before us, we don't want Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons to go from 23% to 30% or 35% or 40%. As Mr. Taillon said, it's possible to make minor changes. I would point out that there are precedents. The senatorial clause, the grandfather clause and the territory clause have been inserted. Changes have been made in the past.

The second condition I referred to deals with respect for natural communities. In other words, factors like geographic characteristics, history and the interests of communities must be taken into consideration.

Based on all of this, I submit that what is proposed in the amendment is in the realm of the possible. In fact, it is in our interest to do this in Bill C-14, because the objective is to reflect Quebec's political weight. Why take baby steps when we can do the work rigorously and ensure that the bill recognizes the need to protect Quebec's political weight, given its exceptional nature? I don't mean that Quebec is better than the other provinces. It's not about Quebec nationalism. Nor am I saying that Quebeckers are better than the other citizens of Canada. You will never hear me say such a thing. We are neither better nor worse than them. It's not that I don't like the citizens in the rest of Canada, but Quebec is different from the other provinces. Our language and our culture, to name just those two characteristics, make up part of our difference, and I want to be sure that this difference is respected.

I will conclude by saying, as the minister also stated, that the opinions of constitutional experts diverge regarding the possibility of making these changes. I would note that our colleague Martin Champoux, the member for Drummond, tabled Bill C-246, on which we voted yesterday. It is precisely the job of the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to determine whether the bill complies with the guidelines adopted by the House of Commons for making the changes proposed by the House of

Commons bill. Bizarrely, the subcommittee approved the idea that Bill C-246, which has exactly the same objective as the objective of my amendment, was a possible mechanism for the Parliament of Canada and the House of Commons without the need to resort to all sorts of other procedures.

I have a lot of respect for the work done by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. If I am told that it isn't possible to make these changes, that means that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is not doing its work properly. I have deep respect for the chair and the members of the committee. I know them well, because I have sat on this committee since 2019. I then gave my seat to my brave colleague, Ms. Gaudreau, who represents the riding of Laurentides—Labelle.

For these reasons, I invite you to take into consideration the fact that the Quebec nation is precious and fragile.

The song *Le plus beau voyage* by Claude Gauthier is a tribute to Quebec's difference. I invite the committee members to listen to it. In the song, Mr. Gauthier talks about a "race in peril", but that means "people in peril". That is what we are experiencing in Quebec.

● (1230)

Honestly, I am not wishing for you to experience what Quebeckers are experiencing. Every day, we get up and go into combat to protect our language and our culture, and to ensure that the only francophone state in North America is able to live and survive. We want to make sure that our children and our grandchildren and great-grandchildren never say

[English]

"Do you remember when we were French?"

[Translation]

I'm finished, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Therrien.

You will have observed that everyone was listening closely to you. Committee members are sensitive to your comments, as am I. However, as I said, I have made a decision, and nothing in what you have said has changed my mind.

Bill C-14 seeks to amend section 51 of the Constitution Act, 1867 to provide that a province will not have fewer members assigned to it than were assigned during the 43rd Parliament. Amendment BQ-1 would provide that the total number of members for the province of Quebec may not be less than 25% of the total number of members in the House of Commons.

At page 770 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, we read:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

The chair is of the opinion, with respect to Bill C-14, that assigning 25% of the seats in the House of Commons to Quebec might necessitate a reduction in the number of seats for another province or provinces, and this is contrary to the principles of the bill.

Accordingly, I declare this amendment to be out of order.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Obviously, Madam Chair, I understand your position, but I don't agree with it. Madam Chair, you know that I have deep respect for what you do and what you are.

With all due respect, I challenge the decision of the chair.

The Chair: Right.

[*English*]

Mr. Clerk.

• (1235)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive): The question is, shall the Chair's ruling be sustained?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vis.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, I would like to move another amendment that will be circulated electronically right at this very moment. Our staff will pass it out, so I'll just hold my comments until everyone has a chance to receive it. You're going to have to check the admissibility.

Should I start talking about why I'm doing it right away?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Chair, do we have it electronically for those of us online?

The Chair: It's being shared around.

Mr. Brad Vis: It's been sent electronically to the clerk.

The Chair: Excellent. He will hit forward, because he is just passing it around to the people in the room.

I am asking Mr. Vis to commence his comments in the interest of time.

Mr. Brad Vis: We've had some great discussions here over the last few weeks and in Parliament about how we deal with these difficult situations. You know, Mr. Therrien got me thinking a lot about Quebec's place in the history of Canada and also about my own province of British Columbia. People don't remember or they don't know in this room that B.C. joined Confederation largely as an administrative matter. We were developed. If you look at the B.C. legislature website as to why B.C. came into existence, it came into existence because of the railway to serve for trade for Ontario and Quebec, Upper and Lower Canada. We were an economic concern. B.C. is home to more indigenous languages and indigenous people than probably any other part of the country. We have a rich history that has formed subsequent to the railway, rich both negatively and positively.

As Mr. Therrien mentioned in his comments and as I raised in the last meeting, with the amount that a taxpayer in British Columbia gives to our federal government, they should receive req-

uisite representation in the House of Commons. I feel in good faith as a westerner and as a British Columbian that I've learned something from the Bloc Québécois: I need to stand up a little more strongly for my province to ensure that we have adequate and effective representation in the House too.

What this amendment to Bill C-14 essentially would do, after the change to the threshold, apply representation by population as it says there: "After the application of rules 1 to 4 and section 51A, in respect of each province, there shall be added, if necessary, a number of members such that the number of members assigned to the province is proportionate to the number of members who would have been assigned in accordance with rule number 1."

There have been many accommodations for Atlantic Canada with the Senate clause to ensure that Atlantic Canadians are over-represented. Quebec is fighting for parity. I understand that, but as a British Columbian, I want parity too, and it doesn't sit well with me that my province is structurally under-represented in this federation, along with Alberta and Ontario, so I'm putting this amendment forward in good faith, and I will leave it there.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I thank you for coming to us with this amendment in good faith.

I'm going to suspend the committee for a couple moments so I can debate this out with legislative clerk to figure out if it's within the scope of the bill or not. It's adding a number of seats across the board, for which I understand there might be a need for royal.... I need to figure out where we are.

Monsieur Therrien.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: I would have liked our colleague to explain to us in detail what the effect of this amendment is. I read it and I understand it, but I want to make sure that everyone understands what it means, because it's somewhat subtle. I would like him to give us an example with figures.

What is the concrete effect of what he is proposing?

He explained what prompted him to propose that amendment, but he did not explain exactly what it meant. I'd like him to tell us exactly what he wants. Then we will be able to debate whether the amendment is in order, but before that, I'd like him to give us some specifics.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you want to?

Mr. Brad Vis: You know what? Tom Kmiec's also a member who's very passionate about this issue. I'm going to allow him to explain it in more detail.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Chair, do you want me to jump in at this point to continue this debate, or would you like to make a ruling first in consultation with the clerk?

The Chair: I think since this is a good faith conversation, if you don't mind perhaps providing Mr. Therrien that answer, it might be good for members, and I will continue the work on the side. If you want to, once again, go ahead.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Chair, I'd be happy to.

Through you, I will ask this of Mr. Therrien.

[*Translation*]

From what I understand of the amendment proposed by the Conservative member from British Columbia, after the application of rule 4 of this section of the Constitution, we would come back to rule 1 to ensure that each province has representation in the House of Commons that is equivalent to the percentage of its population.

For example, if the population of British Columbia represents 11% of the population of Canada, then, after the application of all of the rules, rule 1 would be applied so that British Columbia had 11% of all seats in the House of Commons.

The three provinces affected by this change would be my province, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. They would have more seats in the House of Commons to make that number equivalent to the percentage that their population represents of the population of Canada. That would be the effect of the amendment that has been proposed.

Mr. Alain Therrien: All the clauses applied would become null and void.

Is that it?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: No, that's not it at all. They would be applied, but based on the example I gave, if we consider just the population of Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island—

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Chair, you have declared my amendment not to be in order. So if you declare this amendment to be in order, I will challenge your decision.

The Chair: I have appreciated all the comments and this discussion.

[*English*]

I would say, based on listening to what's been proposed, reading this and speaking with the legislative clerk, I would rule this as inadmissible.

A voice: Oh.

The Chair: I'm not sure if that's Mr. Vis.

Do you want to reply to that, or are we okay with accepting my ruling?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: That which cannot be done directly may not be done indirectly.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: I'll just comment that we want to find better consensus with how we distribute power within the House of Commons. I really do strongly believe that, moving forward in 10 years' time, we're going to have to look at what we've been doing with this bill.

I strongly believe that, to find equality within our federation, provinces should not be structurally under-represented at the expense of others, either in the Senate or in the House of Commons. Coming from a part of the country where we only have six Senate seats and we are under-represented in the House of Commons, I have a duty as a legislator to raise that point time and time again.

Where is economic growth going in Canada? It's going to British Columbia because of the economic growth in Asia. Our ports are strategic for the entire country, but British Columbia doesn't have the ability to stand and fight for itself. We have all of these senators making decisions for our province who have no connection to the beauty and splendour of my riding where the two railways meet, for example.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Do you accept my ruling?

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you.

I do accept the ruling.

Please note that your province is under-represented too.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: We may be looking at the future member for the Maverick Party.

• (1245)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to bring us right back for a second and just say thank you for those changes, and thank you for that passion. My initials are "B.C.", so I have a lot of respect and love for your beautiful province. I can see that this conversation will continue.

For the sake of time and out of respect for your time and attention, I will ask members: Shall clause 2 carry?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: May I ask for a vote, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Certainly.

[*English*]

Mr. Therrien would like a vote.

(Clause 2 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Scheer.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I just wonder if there might be agreement for the rest of the clauses, instead of recorded divisions—just to test the will of the committee—if we might adopt them on division. If somebody isn't enthusiastically supportive, maybe we could just do them on division.

The Chair: Thank you for that suggestion, Mr. Scheer.

Are we okay with proceeding by accepting the rest of the clauses on division?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Or at least one by one—if you want to go through them one by one—rather than recorded divisions, just on division if somebody objects....

The Chair: Mr. Scheer, I think your experience has been well received by the members in the room. I thank you for your constructive answers and solutions always. Thank you.

All right. I do need to ask this: Shall clause 1, the alternative title, carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Perfect.

Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: That is absolutely excellent.

I would say “good job”, and very productive, committee members. With that, we will be returning Tuesday for a committee meeting. We will be in camera and will proceed with the outstanding reports that we will be working on. I look forward to seeing you next week. I hope everyone keeps well and safe, and I thank you for your time and attention.

The meeting is adjourned.

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