

Mar. 26 at 2:42 p.m.

Dear Mr. Johanis,

Thank you for your email. Public Services and Procurement Canada is committed to working in partnership with Parliament in implementing our Long Term Vision and Plan, focused on restoring and modernizing Canada's Parliamentary Precinct so that it meets the needs of a modern Parliament and continues to serve as an inviting environment for Canadians to gather. A core part of this joint plan is the restoration of the iconic Centre Block and the construction of an expanded Visitor Welcome Centre Complex, which will offer visitors an improved, secure, and barrier-free gateway to the Parliament Buildings.

The plan to restore and modernize the Precinct is about more than the buildings. It is about safeguarding and renewing the spaces that are key to the operations of Canada's parliamentary democracy, including the grounds of Parliament Hill. The landscape and setting including the Great Lawn, which serves as Canada's market square, the rugged escarpment and urban forest are as much a part of the Precinct as the neo-gothic buildings themselves. Removing trees in the Parliamentary Precinct is seen as a last resort option. Demonstrating leadership in sustainability is a core objective of the Long Term Vision and Plan and the Centre Block rehabilitation. This commitment includes protecting and enhancing Parliament's Urban Forest.

The restoration of the Centre Block and more specifically, the construction of the next phase of the Visitor Welcome Centre—which will be located underground to minimize the visual impact to this important landscape—will require significant excavation work. Unfortunately, the American Elm tree, is located in the excavation zone making it impossible for the tree to remain in place. Plans to cut the large American Elm are on hold until April 12, 2019, to ensure the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has the ability to study the matter following the re-scheduled appearance of PSPC officials on April 2, 2019.

Major excavation work by winter 2020 is highly dependent on the completion of preparatory work in the spring and summer of 2019 on the East side of the Centre Block. This preparatory work includes archaeological work, the relocation of the Information Technology Duct Bank, and the completion of a construction road. Completing preparatory and major excavation work is also dependent on relocating a number of monuments and the removal and/or relocation of a number of trees. To maintain the project schedule and avoid cost impacts to the Centre Block Rehabilitation Program, the project is proceeding with all other scheduled activities, in accordance with the Federal Land Use Approval granted by the National Capital Commission. Removed trees will be replaced by 4 new trees which exceeds the National Capital Commission's recommendation of a 2 to 1 replacement ratio. In addition, Arborists, in coordination with the University of Guelph, are collecting twigs today from the American Elm for propagation purposes, a procedure that will not harm the tree in any way and will deepen the scientific community's understanding of Elm trees. Thank-you for your continued interest in the Centre Block Rehabilitation Program.

Jennifer Garrett

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