Steel going up as interim House Chamber construction begins this month

The courtyard of the West Block building is being renovated to include a new infill building, all topped by a glass-domed roof, which will include an interim House of Commons Chamber for when work on Centre Block begins in 2018.

Laura Ryckewaert

The new infill—which will also include an interim House of Commons Chamber for when work on Centre Block begins in 2018.

Workers excavated roughly two-stories down in order to build-up a new building base in the courtyard, including two new basement levels, to support a new infill structure, which is estimated to cost $115-million.

Steel framing has already been installed to shape out the new basement floors—the bottom level will house mechanical and electrical systems while the top basement level will include committee rooms, work on both is ongoing—and concrete has now been poured overtop to create a new ground level in the courtyard.

The new infill—which will also include government and opposition lobbies along with viewing galleries—will sit on top of this concrete within the courtyard, and a glass-domed roof will top the entire courtyard space. This roof will be triple-glazed and include moveable blinds to help deal with glare from the sun. The sunlight it lets in is expected to decrease energy costs for the building.

The steel columns that support the glass-domed roof will be visible to occupants inside the interim House Chamber.

ARCOP/FGM Architects was subcontracted for design work on the building and infill, while PCL Constructors was awarded the main West Block project construction management contract.

“The glass roof itself and the structure for that has been in planning since March of last year… which took us through roughly to August, and then from August we started some fabrication of the required steel,” said Mark Koeppeelaar, vice-president of projects at Walters Group, which was subcontracted to do steel work on the West Block.

“A lot of work goes into finishing them and making sure the surface varnishes are cleaned up,” he said, referring to the steel “trees and branches,” as they’ve been dubbed, that will support the new roof. “You’ll be able to walk up to them and touch them. They’re very visible.”

The tops of these “trees and branches” may be visible to pedestrians this summer, depending on your viewpoint, he added.

The “geometry” of the glass-domed roof made construction planning to install the steel more complicated, said Mr. Koeppeelaar, and they ended up “having to go through a step-by-step sequential erection in [the] digital model just to understand each step, the stability of the structure.” This three-dimensional model included any temporary steel needed to support the new structure, as well as assessing “which cranes were available, the capacity of the cranes. Some [steel] elements we had to splice in two pieces to ensure that they could be erected with the crane.”

While it’s more complicated work, Mr. Koeppeelaar said his firm has dealt with “similar challenges” in the past. For example, it helped construct the curved-glass wall of the Shaw Centre in downtown Ottawa.

The permanent infill structure will be converted into new committee rooms once the House of Commons Chamber returns to the Centre Block—expected around 2028, at this point.

Along with work on the infill, Mr. Koeppeelaar’s firm has helped with steel work on the West Block’s interior, which was stripped down to bare brick as part of renovation work. It installed the new steel frame required to split the old Confederation Room 200—previously used to host special parliamentary events—back into two floors of...
office space, as per the original building design.

The West Block hasn’t undergone major renovations since the 1960s, and along with the other neo-Gothic buildings in the Parliamentary Precinct, was in dire need of work. Along with seismic upgrades and the abatement of asbestos and other hazardous materials, extensive mossy restoration work was done in the basement including essentially taking it apart brick-by-brick, numbering those to be restored and returned, and ultimately replacing around 1.4 million bricks.

Currently, mechanical and electrical work is ongoing inside the West Block, and once completed, building occupants will enjoy new technologies similar to other recently renovated Hill spaces, such as the Valour Building. Steel studs for partitions are being used, as are “all of the conduits and so on that are required to future-proof the building for IT and security and all that multi-media,” said Mr. DiMillo. Asbestos abatement is “99 per cent done.”

A new Library of Parliament satellite branch is being added to the West Block, which includes a café-eteria. The “Hot Room,” the office for press gallery members on the Hill, will also go in the building, but Mr. DiMillo said last week that the location of that space is “being discussed now” by Public Services and the House of Commons administration.

Public Services’ massive, multi-billion dollar plan to rehabilitate the Parliamentary Precinct is set to have cost roughly $2.64 billion to date by 2018. The department’s 2016-17 report on plans and priorities indicates $50.8 million will be spent on related work this fiscal year, with another $904.7 million in plans for spending for 2017-18, and $106 million for 2018-19. All work remains “on time, on scope and on budget,” according to Public Services.

Organized in domino-fashion, each major step of the Hill’s renovation depends on the completion of a previous phase. In order for the Centre Block to be emptied for renovations in 2018, work on the West Block and the nearby Government Conference Centre (GCC) at 2 Rideau Street first needs to finish.

The West Block is slated for completion in 2017, while rehabilitation of the GCC, which will house the interim Senate Chamber, will wrap up in time for the start of the 2018 parliamentary session—at which point the interim House and Senate Chambers will start being used. Centre Block is expected to take about a decade to renovate, with work on the East Block building slated to follow.

Survey stickers are already visible throughout the Centre Block building as part of “heritage recording, which has been ongoing for months and will continue throughout the year,” to help develop a 3-D model to plan the building’s overall renovation, said Public Services. Some work, like on northern ventilation towers, is already underway.

“We’re doing a fair amount of scanning of the existing building to really try and get a good drawing basis, because it’s an old building, it’s 100 years old. There are no existing, really precise drawings of the entire building,” said Thierry Montpetit, a senior director with the Parliamentary Precinct’s renovation management and delivery section at Public Services.

A new, underground visitor’s welcome centre is also being built in three phases on the Hill, the first of which is being completed as part of the West Block rehabilitation project. Excavation for this first underground phase, which started in 2015, is almost complete, with concrete pouring for the foundation and walls already “well underway,” according to Public Services. The other two phases will be done in conjunction with rehabilitation of the Centre Block and East Block buildings.

Meanwhile, work on the GCC is well underway, including retrofitting the old railway station’s “concourse” space to accommodate the interim Senate Chamber. Structural supports are being prepared for installation as part of that work, including to help support raised viewing galleries.

In the concourse, “people would embark on the train there, so it was just a rough cement slab. We had to prepare that to bring some conduits and some electrical feeds to support the [interim Senate] Chamber,” said Mr. Montpetit.

He said “we’re going through the material choices” for the interim Chamber with the Senate, but “something tells me that it probably will be red.”

Construction work on the GCC, which followed demolition, began late last year and includes creating new basement space, that the old railway station did not have.

Asbestos abatement is also part of the overall work required on the GCC, as well as seismic upgrades, though Mr. Montpetit said some heritage feature aspects of the building, namely “the decorative plaster” and columns, contain some asbestos and will be left in place.

“In trying to keep the heritage finishes we have to balance. It’s very safely incased; there will be no exposure,” he said.

“One completed you’ll be able to walk through the north entrance [of the GCC], walk through the majestic stairs that were there before, and see right through to the Senate Chamber in the background.”

Next up for completion is the Wellington Building, at the corner of Bank and Wellington streets, which will also serve an important interim function when renovations begin on the Centre Block, providing 70 parliamentary offices, 16 committee rooms, and a new Library of Parliament branch, among other things. These renovations are estimated to cost a total of $425.2 million, and include restoration of a unique, Byzantine-style mosaic, which adorns the lobby ceiling by the building’s entrance.

Public Services is set to hand over the building to the House of Commons administration this month, with final finishes, system tests and other “commissioning” work still to take place. Some offices are already furnished inside the building, which is expected to open for use in September. Office allocation will be based on party standing in the House and determined by the respective party whips, starting with anyone displaced by work on the Centre Block.

Members of the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee got a tour of the West Block and Wellington Building construction site on April 14, including going down into the 20-meter-deep pit excavated for the West Block section of the new underground visitor’s welcome centre.

“It was very interesting to see it,” said committee member NDP MP Erin Weir (Regina-Lewvan, Sask.), adding a highlight for him was being able to see “the top of the Peace Tower from the bottom of the pit that will be the new visitor’s centre.”

Liberal MP Nick Whalen (St. John’s East, N.L.) said it was “a very interesting walk through the West Block,” and seeing where the interim House Chamber will go. He added that, as a new MP, he was unfamiliar with the building, which has been under construction since 2011.

From the “concrete slab of the floor of the Chamber,” he said it “looks like it’s going to be a very impressive, inspirational Chamber.” Mr. Whalen also lauded the work he saw done inside the Wellington Building, another space new to him. “Those murals were just spectacular,” he said referring to the building’s lobby mosaic, which dates to the 1920s.

“I think you want people, when they come to government buildings in their capital, to be inspired, and I think people are going to be very proud with what they see,” he said.  

@GovGenPA  #ggawards
office space, as per the original building design. The West Block hasn’t undergone major renovations since the 1960s and along with other neo-Gothic buildings in the Parliamentary Precinct, was in dire need of work. Along with seismic upgrades and the abatement of asbestos and other hazardous materials, extensive masonry restoration work was done in the building including essentially taking it apart brick-by-brick, numbering those to be restored and returned, and ultimately replacing around 1.4 million bricks.

Currently, mechanical and electrical work is ongoing inside the West Block, and once completed, building occupants will enjoy new technologies similar to other recently renovated Hill spaces, such as the Valour Building. Steel studs for partitions are also being installed, as are “all of the conduits and so on that are required to future-proof the building for IT and security and multi-media,” said Mr. DiMillo. Asbestos abatement is “99 per cent done.”

A new Library of Parliament satellite branch is being added to the West Block, which includes a café. The “Hot Room,” the office for press gallery members on the Hill, will also go in the building, but Mr. DiMillo said last week that the location of that space is “being discussed now” by Public Services and the House of Commons administration.

Public Services’ massive, multi-billion dollar plan to rehabilitate the Parliamentary Precinct is set to have cost roughly $2.64-billion by 2018. The department’s 2016-17 report on plans and priorities indicates $5.8-million will be spent on related work this fiscal year, with another $504.7-million in plans pending for 2017-18, and $160-million for 2018-19. All work remains “on time, on scope and on budget,” according to Public Services.

Organized in domino-fashion, each major step of the Hill’s reno-vation depends on the completion of a previous phase. In order for the Centre Block to be emptied for renovations in 2018, work on the West Block and the nearby Government Conference Centre (GCC) at 2 Rideau Street first needs to finish. The West Block is slated for completion in 2017, while rehabilitation of the GCC, which will house the interim Senate Chamber, will wrap up in time for the start of the 2018 parliamentary session—at which point the interim House and Senate Chambers will start being built. Centre Block is expected to take about a decade to renovate, with work on the East Block building slated to follow.

Survey stickers are already visible throughout the Centre Block building as part of “heritage recording,” which has been ongoing for months and will “continue throughout the year,” to help develop a 3-D model to plan the building’s overall renovation, said Mr. DiMillo. Some work, like on northern ventilation towers, is already underway.

“We’re doing a fair amount of scanning of the existing building to really try and get a good drawing basis, because it’s an old building, it’s 100 years old. There are no existing, really precise drawings of the entire building,” said Thierry Montpetit, a senior director with the Parliamentary Precinct’s renovation management and delivery section at Public Services.

A new, underground visitor’s welcome centre is also being built in three phases on the Hill, the first of which is being completed as part of the West Block rehabilitation project. Excavation for this first under-ground phase, which started in 2015, is almost complete, with concrete pouring for the foundation and walls already “well underway,” according to Public Services. The other two phases will be done in conjunction with rehabilitation of the Centre Block and East Block buildings.

Meanwhile, work on the GCC is well underway, including re-fitting the old railway station’s “concourse” space to accommodate the interim Senate Chamber. Structural supports are being prepared for installation as part of that work, including to help support raised viewing galleries. In the concourse, people would embark on the train there, so it was just a rough cement slab. We had to prepare that to bring some conduits and some electrical feeds to support the [interim Senate] Chamber,” said Mr. Montpetit. He said “we’re going through the material choices” for the interim Chamber with the Senate, but “something tells me that it probably will be red.”

Construction work on the GCC, which followed demolition, began late last year and includes creating new basement space, that the old railway station did not have. Asbestos abatement is also part of the overall work required on the GCC, as well as seismic upgrades, though Mr. Montpetit said some heritage feature aspects of the building, namely “the decorative plaster” and columns, contain some asbestos and will be left in place.

“In trying to keep the heritage finishes we have to balance. It’s very safely incased; there will be no exposure,” he said.

“[Once completed] you’ll be able to walk through the north entrance of the West Block building, walk through the majestic stairs that were there before, and see right through to the Senate Chamber in the background.”

Next up for completion is the Wellington Building, at the corner of Bank and Wellington streets, which will also serve an important interim function when renovations begin on the Centre Block, providing 70 parliamentary offices, 10 committee rooms, and a new Library of Parliament branch, among other things. These Renova-tions are estimated to cost a total of $425.2-million, and include restoration of a unique, Byzantine-style mosaic, which adorns the lobby ceiling by the building’s front entrance.

Public Services is set to hand over the building to the House of Commons administration this month, with final finishes, system tests and other “commissioning” work still to take place. Some offices are already furnished inside the building, which is expected to open for use in September. Office allocation will be based on party standing in the House and determined by the respective party whip, starting with anyone displaced by work on the Centre Block.

Members of the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee got a tour of the West Block and Wellington Building construction sites on April 14, including going down into the 20-meter-deep pit excavated for the West Block section of the new underground visitor’s welcome centre.

“It was very interesting to see,” it said committee member NDP MP Erin Weir (Regina-Lewvan, Sask.), adding a highlight for him was being able to see “the top of the Peace Tower from the bottom of the pit that will be the new visi-tor’s centre.”

Liberal MP Nick Whalen (St. John’s East, N.L.) said it was “a very interesting walk through the West Block,” and seeing where the interim House Chamber will go. He added that, as a new MP, he was unfamiliar with the building, which has been under construc-tion since 2011.

From the “concrete slab of the floor of the Chamber,” he said it “looks like it’s going to be a very impressive, inspirational Chamber.” Mr. Whalen also lauded the work he saw done inside the Wellington Building, another space new to him. “Those murals were just spectacular,” he said referring to the building’s lobby mosaic, which dates to the 1920s.

“I think you want people, when they come to government buildings in their capital, to be inspired, and I think people are going to be very proud with what they see,” he said. byrebiewart@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times
office space, as per the original building design. The West Block hasn’t undergone major renovations since the 1960s, and along with the other neo-Gothic buildings in the Parliamentary Precinct, was in dire need of work. Along with seismic upgrades and the abatement of asbestos and other hazardous materials, extensive masonry restoration work was done in the building, including essentially taking it apart brick-by-brick, numbering those to be restored and returned, and ultimately replacing around 1.4-million bricks. Currently, mechanical and electrical work is ongoing inside the West Block, and once completed, building occupants will enjoy new technologies similar to other recently renovated Hill spaces, such as the Valour Building. Steel studs for partitions are also being installed, as are “all of the conduits and so on that are required to future-proof the building for IT and security and multimedia,” said Mr. DiMillo. Asbestos abatement is “99 per cent done.”

A new Library of Parliament satellite branch is being added to the West Block, which includes a café. The “Hot Room,” the office for press gallery members on the Hill, will also go in the building, but Mr. DiMillo said last week that the location of that space is “being discussed now” by Public Services and the House of Commons administration.

Public Services’ massive, multi-billion dollar plan to rehabilitate the Parliamentary Precinct is set to have cost roughly $2.64-billion by 2018. The department’s 2016-17 report on plans and priorities indicates $510.8-million will be spent on related work this fiscal year, with another $504.7-million in planning spending for 2017-18, and $106-million for 2018-19. All work remains “on time, on scope and on budget,” according to Public Services.

Organized in domino-fashion, each major step of the Hill’s renovation depends on the completion of a previous phase. In order for the Centre Block to be emptied for renovations in 2018, work on the West Block and the nearby Government Conference Centre (GCC) at 2 Rideau Street first needs to finish. The West Block is slated for completion in 2017, while rehabilitation of the GCC, which will house the interim Senate Chamber, will wrap up in time for the start of the 2018 parliamentary session—at which point the inter- im House and Senate Chambers will start being built. Centre Block is expected to take about a decade to renovate, with work on the East Block building slated to follow.

Survey stickers are already visible throughout the Centre Block building as part of “heritage recording,” which has been ongoing for months and will “continue throughout the year” to help develop a 3-D model to plan the building’s overall renovation, said Public Services. Some work, like on northern ventilation towers, is already underway.

“We’re doing a fair amount of scanning of the existing building to really try and get a good drawing basis, because it’s an old building, it’s 100 years old. There are no existing, really precise drawings of the entire building,” said Thierry Montpetit, the director with the Parliamentary Precinct’s renovation management and delivery section at Public Services.

A new, underground visitor’s centre is also being built in three phases on the Hill, the first of which is being completed as part of the West Block rehabilitation project. Excavation for this first under- ground phase, which started in 2015, is almost complete, with concrete pouring for the foundation and walls already “well underway,” according to Public Services. The other two phases will be done in conjunction with rehabilitation of the Centre Block and East Block buildings.

Meanwhile, work on the GCC is well underway, including re-fitting the old railway station’s “concourse” space to accommodate the interim Senate Chamber. Structural supports are being prepared for installation as part of that work, including to help support raised viewing galleries. “[In the concourse, people] would embark on the train there, so it was just a rough cement slab. We had to prepare that to bring some conduits and some electrical feeds to support the [interim Sen- ate] Chamber,” said Mr. Montpetit. He said “we’re going through the material choices” for the interim Chamber with the Senate, but “something tells me that it probably will be red.”

Construction work on the GCC, which followed demolition, began late last year and includes creating new basement space, that the old railway station did not have. Asbestos abatement is also part of the overall work required on the GCC, as well as seismic upgrades, though Mr. Montpetit said some heritage feature aspects of the building, namely “the decorative plaster” and columns, contain some asbestos and will be left in place. “In trying to keep the heritage finishes we have to balance. It’s very safely incased; there will be no exposure,” he said.

“One completed you’ll be able to walk through the north entrance [of the GCC], walk through the majestic stairs that were there before, and see right through to the Senate Chamber in the background.”

Next up for completion is the Wellington Building, at the corner of Bank and Wellington streets, which will also serve an important interim function when renovations begin on the Centre Block, providing 70 parliamentary offices, 10 committee rooms, and a new Library of Parliament branch, among other things. These Renova- tions are estimated to cost a total of $425.2-million, and include restoration of a unique, Byzantine-style mosaic, which adorns the lobby ceiling by the building’s “concourse,” he said referring to an area called “the decorative pit excavated for the West Block building and for the Peace Tower from the bottom of the pit that will be the new visit- otor’s centre.”

Liberal MP Nick Whalen (St. John’s East, N.L.) said it was “a very interesting walk through the West Block,” and seeing where the interim House Chamber will go. He added that, as a new MP, he was unfamiliar with the building, which has been under construc- tion since 2011.

From the “concrete slab of the floor of the Chamber,” he said it “looks like it’s going to be a very impressive, inspirational Chamber.” Mr. Whalen also lauded the work he saw done inside the Wel- lington Building, another space new to him. “Those murals were just spectacular,” he said referring to the building’s lobby mosaic, which dates to the 1920s. “I think you want people, when they come to government buildings in their capital, to be inspired, and I think people are going to be very proud with what they see,” he said.

Susan Aglukark, singer-songwriter and humanitarian

“‘I love the North, I love being an Inuk, I love that history. That’s what I write about.’”

- Susan Aglukark, singer-songwriter and humanitarian

Tickets now on sale

$75 + $100 + $150 = Your ticket includes: 6:30 p.m. Cocktails and Canapés 8:00 p.m. Gala Tribute Performance 10:30 p.m. Champagne, Desserts, Dancing

National Arts Centre Saturday, June 11

NAC Box Office or nac-ca.ca/ggawards @govpaa ggawards

CONGRATULATIONS, SUSAN AGLUKARK, 2016 GOVERNOR GENERAL’S PERFORMING ARTS AWARD LAUREATE

GOMER GENERAL’S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS GALA CELEBRATING CANADA’S HIGHEST HONOUR IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Photo: Denise Grant