

Ottawa Light Rail Commission

S. Wright-Gilbert
on Thursday, April 7, 2022



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OTTAWA LIGHT RAIL COMMISSION MEETING
CITY OF OTTAWA
S. WRIGHT-GILBERT
APRIL 7, 2022

---- Held via Zoom Videoconferencing, with all
participants attending remotely, on the 7th day of
April, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. to 4:10 P.M

1 COMMISSION COUNSEL:

2

3 Kate McGrann, Co-Lead Counsel Member

4 Liz McLellan, Commission Counsel Member

5

6 PARTICIPANT:

7

8 Sarah Wright-Gilbert

9 Peter Wardle, Esq. Singleton Urquhart Reynolds

10 Vogel LLP counsel for Ms. Wright-Gilbert

11

12 ALSO PRESENT:

13

14 Colleen Rea, Stenographer/Transcriptionist

15 Elizabeth Pilbrow, Virtual Technician

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INDEX OF EXHIBITS

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

NUMBER/DESCRIPTION	PAGE/LINE NO.
1: CV of Sarah Wright-Gilbert	5
2: Article dated September 24, 2021	37

1 ---- Upon commencing at 2:00 p.m.

2 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: AFFIRMED.

3 MS. MCGRANN: Good afternoon,
4 Ms. Wright-Gilbert. My name is Kate McGrann. I'm
5 one of the co-lead counsel on the Commission. I'm
6 joined today by Liz McLellan, who is a member of
7 the Commission counsel team.

8 Before I begin with my questions, I
9 just want to share with you some information about
10 today's interview.

11 The purpose of today's interview is to
12 obtain your evidence under oath or solemn
13 declaration for use at the Commission's public
14 hearings. This will be a collaborative interview
15 such that my co-counsel may intervene to ask
16 certain questions. If time permits, your counsel
17 may ask follow-up questions at the end of this
18 interview.

19 This interview is being transcribed.
20 The Commission intends to enter this transcript
21 into evidence at the Commission's public hearings
22 either at the hearings or by way of procedural
23 order before the hearings commence.

24 The transcript will be posted to the
25 Commission's public website along with any

1 corrections made to it after it is entered into
2 evidence.

3 The transcript, along with any
4 corrections later made to it, will be shared with
5 the Commission's participants and their counsel on
6 a confidential basis before being entered into
7 evidence.

8 You will be given the opportunity to
9 review your transcript and correct any typos or
10 other errors before the transcript is shared with
11 the participants or entered into evidence. Any
12 non-typographical corrections that you make will be
13 appended to the transcript.

14 Pursuant to Section 33(6) of the Public
15 Inquiries Act 2009, that section provides a witness
16 on an inquiry shall be deemed to have objected to
17 answer any question asked of him or her on the
18 ground that his or her answer may tend to
19 incriminate the witness or may tend to establish
20 his or her liability to civil proceedings at the
21 instance of the Crown or of any person, and no
22 answer given by a witness at an inquiry shall be
23 used or be receivable in evidence against him or
24 her in any trial or other proceedings against him
25 or her thereafter taking place other than a

1 prosecution for perjury giving such evidence.

2 As required by Section 33(7) of the
3 Public Inquiries Act 2009, you are hereby advised
4 that you have the right to object to answer any
5 questions under Section 5 of the Canada Evidence
6 Act.

7 With respect to today's interview, if
8 you need to take a break at any time, just let us
9 know and we will do so. Do you have any questions
10 about any of that?

11 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: No, I don't.
12 Thank you.

13 MS. MCGRANN: Okay. I am going to
14 start today by sharing my screen with you to show
15 you a document. We asked your counsel to share a
16 CV of yours with us in advance of the interview.
17 We received a copy of this document. Do you
18 recognize this document?

19 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes.

20 MS. MCGRANN: Is this a copy of your
21 current CV?

22 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes.

23 MS. MCGRANN: Okay. Thank you very
24 much. So we'll enter that as Exhibit one for this
25 examination.

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EXHIBIT 1:

CV of Sarah Wright-Gilbert

MS. MCGRANN: I will stop sharing my screen.

MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I will note that I only gave my City of Ottawa email because I knew that a lot of the information in this interview was going to be made public, and I did not want my actual professional email address with the Federal Government out there for everyone, so I used my City of Ottawa email address.

MS. MCGRANN: So my first question for you is how did you come to serve as a Citizen Transit Commissioner?

MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So there was a municipal election in Ottawa in 2018 -- October 2018, I believe. Shortly after that election, I happened to see a Facebook post from the City of Ottawa, a callout for volunteers. This was at a time when I had been focussing all of my energies on my career.

My career was incredibly involved. I was working every weekend, nights. And I let my community responsibilities, my volunteer work slip,

1 and I didn't feel very good about that.

2 And so because my husband won't let me
3 go into the Humane Society because I will bring
4 them all home, I thought that volunteering for the
5 City might be a really good opportunity for me to
6 give back. And so I applied.

7 The application process was a cover
8 letter, which was optional, and a CV. I applied
9 for Transit Commission since I was a user -- a
10 daily user of public transit. And the process was
11 that I was called in for an interview. It's my
12 understanding that there were nearly a hundred
13 applicants for the four positions, the four citizen
14 commissioner positions. And I was called in for an
15 interview.

16 I believe to the best of my
17 recollection there was six or eight city
18 counsellors. I couldn't name all of them because I
19 didn't know know them at the time. I do remember
20 Commission Chair Allan Hublely was there and as well
21 as Councillor Laura Dudas, and a representative of
22 the mayor's office was also there to interview me.

23 The interview lasted maybe 30 minutes.
24 And I was chosen approximately the next day or the
25 day after I was notified that I was chosen as a

1 commissioner.

2 MS. MCGRANN: So in or around when did
3 you join the Commission?

4 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So the timing is
5 -- it seems like not that long ago, but there's a
6 lot of things that have happened since then.

7 So I believe my first day I signed my
8 oath of office on February 6th of 2019, but I do
9 believe that there was obviously -- I was chosen as
10 the commissioner. I know that I was chosen as
11 commissioner before that. Council had to --
12 council as a whole had to have a vote on whether or
13 not I was okay with them. I think it was just
14 performative kind of vote, to be honest with you.
15 But I do remember signing my oath of office on
16 February 6, 2019.

17 MS. MCGRANN: Okay.

18 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: And a
19 comprehensive non-disclosure agreement as well.

20 MS. MCGRANN: So I'll come back with a
21 couple more questions about you joining the Transit
22 Commission in a second. But outside of your role
23 as a citizen transit commissioner, have you had any
24 other involvement with the LRT through, for
25 example, attending public consultations or

1 otherwise?

2 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I did attend one.
3 It wasn't a consultation, it was more of a hey,
4 we're launching this kind of event. And I believe
5 -- sorry, I must correct myself. I did go to an
6 event at a local arena where there was some
7 consultation just generally for the City on the LRT
8 as well as other City services. I can't recall the
9 date. I do apologize. The mayor was in
10 attendance. And other than that, my involvement
11 with the LRT was I used it every single day --
12 well, every single -- sorry, to be more precise,
13 every single workday Monday to Friday up until the
14 pandemic.

15 MS. MCGRANN: So turning back to the
16 work that you do on the Transit Commission, what is
17 your mandate as a commissioner?

18 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So as a
19 commissioner, it was our role to promote public
20 transit, to -- really, it's provide oversight of
21 and direction to OC Transpo on all things public
22 transit related to the bus, Para Transpo, and LRT.

23 MS. MCGRANN: What was the Transit
24 Commission doing with respect to stage one of the
25 LRT when you joined it in February of 2019?

1 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So in February
2 2019, the stage one of the LRT had not been handed
3 over yet to OC Transpo. So at that time the LRT
4 was under the responsibility of the Finance and
5 Economic Development Committee, commonly referred
6 to as Fedco. That committee is made up of the
7 committee chairs from all the various of their
8 committees and the mayor also sits -- I think sits
9 as chair of Fedco.

10 So at that time, we were really just
11 really receiving what I would call perfunctory
12 updates. Updates on when the handover might
13 happen, obviously had been delayed by quite a bit
14 at that time, and just updates on, you know, what
15 had been done for customer service and stuff like
16 that until the LRT was, I believe, on revenue
17 service availability, so when customers were
18 allowed on it, it didn't fall under the purview of
19 the Transit Commission, it fell under Fedco,
20 similar to how phase two is now under purview of
21 Fedco.

22 MS. MCGRANN: In your view from your
23 experience, what steps did the Transit Commission
24 take to prepare for a handover of the system in
25 September of 2019?

1 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So we started
2 meeting in -- as I said, I signed my oath of office
3 in February 2019. Our first meeting was a very
4 short one. It was to take place 30 minutes after
5 council when a budget was tabled at council. And
6 then Transit Commission -- all the commissions,
7 actually, have to meet just to refer the budget to
8 the next regular meeting. It's sort of a pro forma
9 meeting. And so that was my first meeting.

10 And then we met again I believe in
11 March, April, May, and possibly June of 2019. And
12 each of those meetings I believe, or at least
13 several of them, to the best of my recollection we
14 would have received -- we received an update on
15 line one and the launch, because at this point we
16 were quite a bit a ways past the anticipated launch
17 date. That update came from OC Transpo general
18 manager John Manconi and his staff.

19 We were provided updates on essentially
20 whether or not we were ready for "rail". And we
21 don't sit in July or August. So the last update we
22 would have gotten via Commission meeting would have
23 been in June. I'd have to see the agenda to
24 recall, and then August was when the handover took
25 place.

1 August 2019 was when the handover from
2 RTM -- RTG apologies, took place. And then
3 September was revenue service availability, and
4 there was a meeting in September.

5 MS. MCGRANN: Did you receive any
6 information in advance of handover about what kind
7 of updates the Transit Commission would be
8 receiving about the operations of LRT and/or what
9 kind of oversight the Transit Commission would be
10 conducting of the operations of stage one of the
11 LRT?

12 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yeah, as far as I
13 can recall -- again, it's been a while -- there was
14 no formal update mechanism for Transit Commission
15 by way of Transit Commission meetings. It was not
16 a formal agenda item on the meetings -- on the
17 meeting agenda, until much later when council Riley
18 Brockinton actually forced a vote to make it a
19 formal agenda item so we would have an update every
20 month, but it was not scheduled on the agenda for
21 updates.

22 And in terms of our oversight of the
23 operations, the attitude -- in my opinion, the
24 attitude from OC Transpo senior management was very
25 much "let us do our jobs". You don't need to be

1 concerned about the operations. You don't need to
2 be concerned about -- we'll tell you what you need
3 to know in the Commission meetings with our very
4 long PowerPoint decks, but you don't need to be
5 concerned about the operations. We are handling
6 the operations. That was very much the attitude,
7 from my perspective, in my opinion, for most
8 operational matters within -- for OC Transpo.

9 To be fair, however, the operation of
10 OC Transpo is a delegated authority to the manager,
11 the general manager at the time, John Manconi under
12 the Transit Commission.

13 So Transit Commission doesn't
14 necessarily -- isn't involved in the day-to-day
15 operations. That wouldn't be feasible. But there
16 certainly wasn't a lot of information being
17 provided to Transit Commission other than what I
18 would call generic updates.

19 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned that stage
20 one of the LRT operations wasn't a formal agenda
21 item, at least at the outset. Is that treatment
22 different than other operating aspects of the
23 City's transit system? For example, are they
24 standing agenda items?

25 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That's a good

1 question. At that time, no, they were not a
2 standing agenda item. So we didn't actually have
3 any standing agenda items that I can recall for the
4 Transit Commission at that time. We were -- mostly
5 the updates would be a line one update or, you
6 know, agenda items would sort of be on an ad hoc
7 basis as needed.

8 In terms of the other parts of transit
9 in Ottawa, no, there were no standing items related
10 to bus or Para Transpo at that time but, as I said,
11 it was a forced vote that was championed by
12 Councillor Brockington.

13 MS. MCGRANN: What did you understand
14 the purpose of that initiative to be to each of the
15 standing agenda items?

16 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Right. So
17 Councillor Brockington and I are friendly, so we do
18 talk occasionally, and he had brought it to my
19 attention wanting to get my support that he had
20 raised it with Chair Hubley that he thought that
21 given -- and I couldn't give you a time frame on
22 this, but I do believe it was still in 2019, but
23 late 2019 when the problems started happening. I
24 could be mistaken, it could have been early 2020.

25 But when the problems started

1 happening, which is essentially right away,
2 Councillor Brockington approached the chair, I
3 believe, by email asking him to add this as an
4 agenda item. The chair, from what I understand,
5 refused. And Councillor Brockington brought it as
6 a motion to Transit Commission to have a line one
7 LRT bus and bus service update be a standing agenda
8 item number one on the agenda for the Transit
9 Commission. And the vote did pass.

10 MS. MCGRANN: Okay. You referred
11 generally to when the issues started. I take that
12 to mean when the issues in the operations of stage
13 one of the LRT started?

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes, I apologize.
15 I'm first and foremost a regular person and a
16 transit user. I was until the pandemic. So I was
17 riding the LRT from day one. So yes, to be clear,
18 I was referring to the problems -- the operational
19 problems when customers were riding the train.
20 This was still during the parallel bus service
21 period, yes.

22 MS. MCGRANN: Sitting where you are
23 today, do you feel that the Transit Commission was
24 prepared for system handover?

25 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sorry, I didn't

1 catch the last word. You cut out a little. I
2 apologize.

3 MS. MCGRANN: Do you feel that the
4 Transit Commission was prepared for the handover of
5 stage one of the LRT for the system?

6 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sitting where I am
7 today, knowing what I know now years later, no.
8 The Transit Commission was not prepared. We did
9 not have all of the information that senior
10 management at OC Transpo and City management and
11 the mayor -- we didn't have the information that
12 they had. We were not -- we did not know that the
13 trial running period was not satisfied. We did not
14 know that RTM -- RTG, sorry, I tend to conflate
15 those, I apologize, they're essentially the same
16 company. RTG had proposed a soft launch that RTG
17 had proposed as mitigation measures, like a soft
18 launch.

19 We didn't, as a whole, know that. I
20 certainly didn't know that. I don't think I could
21 speak for my colleagues on the Commission, but I
22 certainly didn't know, and I attended every
23 meeting, and I'm very actively participating in
24 those meetings. And so I think it came -- for me,
25 it came as a pretty big surprise when this shiny

1 new system started to -- after revenue service
2 availability started to almost immediately have
3 serious delays and problems that have just
4 escalated over the years, to be honest with you.

5 MS. MCGRANN: So you've mentioned that
6 you felt that the Transit Commission didn't have
7 information that was available to others at the
8 City. You talked about the trial running period
9 not being satisfied. You talked about not knowing
10 that RCG had proposed a soft launch.

11 Before I go any further, I just want to
12 make sure that we're talking about the same thing.
13 What do you mean by a "soft launch"?

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So I only know now
15 what obviously has been reported in the media,
16 although I take that with a grain of salt because I
17 do understand that was part of RTG's court filings
18 and other litigation, but the package of documents
19 that was provided to the Commission by the City, I
20 also have that package of documents, and so I did
21 notice that in the package there is mention, I
22 think it's to a meeting to Fedco, that there was a
23 proposed soft launch that RTG was proposing as a
24 mitigation measure.

25 I mean I suppose we could say that

1 there was a bit of a soft launch. We had parallel
2 bus service for three weeks, but that is -- so I
3 don't know because I'm -- I don't sit on Fedco, I
4 don't know if there was any elaboration in terms of
5 what soft launch would mean.

6 In my experience with Transit
7 Commission, there is little to no elaboration to
8 what is written on a slide, a PowerPoint slide. In
9 order to get that elaboration, I had to learn very
10 quickly how to phrase questions and follow-ups in
11 order to get the information that I was seeking as
12 a commissioner.

13 MS. MCGRANN: With respect to a soft
14 launch, just to try to find some level of
15 understanding, is it your understanding that a soft
16 launch would involve a start up of public service
17 that was less than full public service? So some
18 adjustments to it that would mean it could ramp up
19 to full public service?

20 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes. Sorry. Yes,
21 I didn't really answer your previous question, I
22 apologize.

23 Yes, so my understanding of a soft
24 launch is that you would limit trains, perhaps, or
25 limit services, I think would probably be the best

1 way to do it while at the same time running the
2 parallel bus service to offer other options to
3 customers, yes.

4 MS. MCGRANN: With respect to the
5 information that you said that the Transit
6 Commission didn't have at the time of handover, I
7 want to understand what you think could have been
8 done with that information with the benefits of
9 having it at the time of handover would have been.

10 So let's start with the information
11 about what came of the trial running period. So
12 for starters, what is your understanding of what
13 the results of the trial running period were?

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So my
15 understanding of the trial running period, my only
16 information about the trial running period, has
17 come from investigative reports from
18 Joanne Chianello at the CBC. And so from what I've
19 read, it's my understanding that I do know that the
20 trains were supposed to run for 12 days and be able
21 to run all day, as a train would. And it's my
22 understanding that the trains could not make a full
23 day. Some of them could not make more than a few
24 hours before having issues and having to be pulled
25 off the line.

1 Again, my information comes from access
2 to information requests that Joanne Chianello used
3 for her reporting, emails that were as a result of
4 those ATI's. So in terms of -- from my perspective
5 as a commissioner, if I had known that those trains
6 could not make it through the 12 days of testing,
7 which were a requirement under the project
8 agreement, I would have -- I would have felt that
9 it was my responsibility to ask some very serious
10 and hard questions of OC Transpo, and quite
11 honestly RTG if they would have attended Transit
12 Commission meetings to ask the questions about the
13 readiness of the line and of the entire system for
14 passengers, and what the reasoning was, what was
15 behind the decision-making, and I think that's the
16 heart of the matter, what was behind the
17 decision-making of launching this line when, in my
18 opinion, it was not ready.

19 And so, you know, as a commissioner, I
20 see my role as a citizen commissioner one who used,
21 up until the pandemic, public transit every day, I
22 saw my role as the people's representative. I used
23 transit every day to and from work, both bus and
24 train, and so I used the system beginning to end,
25 Blair to Tunney's Pasture. That was my eyes on the

1 train from beginning to end. I saw myself as the
2 people's representative, and I still do.

3 So it's the people who are paying for
4 the system whether you're riding it or not. And so
5 I would have seen it, and I still see it, as my
6 responsibility to ask very tough questions about
7 the system that we've spent so much money on. And,
8 quite honestly, if I had known about those 12 days
9 of testing, I would have asked some very probably
10 uncomfortable questions both in Transit Commission
11 and possibly in the media as well to put pressure
12 on public officials.

13 MS. MCGRANN: To put pressure on them
14 to do what?

15 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: To re-think the
16 decision. So we were advised -- I can't recall the
17 exact date, but we were advised that the handover
18 of the line would happen in August of 2019, and
19 that there was a big to do. There was a button
20 that the mayor and other officials pushed, and we
21 were all there for this big launch and this public
22 ride on the train, but, you know, had we known when
23 others in OC Transpo senior management and, you
24 know, senior management, senior leadership with the
25 City, had we known what they knew at that time, in

1 my view, I don't think -- I can't speak for my
2 colleagues, but I know that I would not have -- I
3 certainly wouldn't have promoted the system as I
4 did. I wouldn't have -- and I would have
5 definitely asked a lot of questions, hard
6 questions, about the readiness and the safety of
7 the system, and I just wish I'd known, to be honest
8 with you.

9 You know, it's -- there's a lot of
10 things I wish I'd known.

11 MS. MCGRANN: I have the same questions
12 for you about the soft launch proposal. What do
13 you think having information about any proposal
14 like that that may have been made would have done?
15 What would you have done with that information in
16 your role as transit commissioner?

17 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Right. So same
18 thing. I would have asked a lot of questions
19 publicly, privately. I'm not a big fan of the
20 private email question to City official in my role
21 as commissioner. I feel as though my role is on
22 behalf of the public, and so I use social media and
23 send out emails about this waiting for an answer or
24 here's the answer, but I would have asked a lot of
25 questions. I also would have wanted to know what

1 does RTG propose as a soft launch? Why are they
2 proposing that? What is their concern? What are
3 we doing to mitigate those concerns if we're going
4 to ignore their request for a soft launch?

5 You know, because putting it into
6 perspective, RTG -- it's my understanding from a
7 project agreement that RTG didn't get their massive
8 payment of money until the handover, and I think
9 there was another payment at revenue service
10 availability.

11 And so in that case, when a company is
12 not going to receive a huge chunk of payment that
13 has already been delayed because for various
14 reasons the line was delayed, the opening of the
15 line was delayed, for them to then come back and
16 say, We're not sure about this. We're not sure
17 about launching this train. We'd like to mitigate
18 it with a soft launch or extended parallel service
19 or maybe delay again, you know, in my view, those
20 motives can only be cure because they are at risk
21 of financial penalties for not opening on time.

22 And so if I had known that -- you know,
23 if I'd known that they had concerns, I honestly
24 would have been asking a lot of questions on behalf
25 of tax payers in Ottawa.

1 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned a large or
2 massive payment on handover. Do you know if you're
3 referring to a payment on substantial completion?

4 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I think that's it,
5 yes. So all of the contracting -- I should note
6 that all of the contracting was done under Fedco,
7 and any questions at Transit Commission with
8 respect to contracting were always shut down by the
9 commission chair as it being a "Fedco matter".

10 I have -- as a citizen transit
11 commissioner, I have never seen the unredacted
12 project agreement. I am not allowed to see it. I
13 have asked on many occasions to see the unredacted
14 version. I have taken an oath of office. I have
15 signed a comprehensive non-disclosure agreement,
16 and I have to vote on the same things as councillor
17 commissioners, but I am not allowed to see the
18 unredacted project agreement, so my information
19 when it comes to payments is limited just simply
20 because any questions or any search for information
21 was typically shut down by the chair as a "Fedco
22 matter".

23 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned a little
24 bit earlier that as a Transit commissioner, you
25 learned how to phrase questions, and I'm

1 paraphrasing here, but pursue answers to those
2 questions. What did you mean by that?

3 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yeah. So I've
4 never sat on a commission before. I never thought
5 that they would choose me, quite honestly. I'm one
6 of those people that's quite direct and really
7 blatantly honest pretty much all of the time. Not
8 the best quality sometimes, but, you know.

9 So when I first started as a
10 commissioner, I will admit that I was naive,
11 absolutely naive, babe in the woods naive, and very
12 much someone who having worked in the Federal
13 Government and then worked for the Provincial
14 Government before that very much used to have
15 deferring, being deferent, showing deference to
16 superiors. As a public servant you just get used
17 to it.

18 So when I first started as a
19 commissioner, we didn't get any procedural
20 instructions. I had no idea what was going on most
21 of the time. Was I supposed to vote? I don't
22 know. The one instruction we did get, and I recall
23 this from -- it was the day that I signed my oath
24 of office of February 6 of 2019, where
25 Rick O'Connor, who at that time was the City

1 solicitor, we were in a room that is at the
2 commission, we were in a room doing our oaths of
3 office and all of that, and he gave us a piece of
4 advice, and his piece of advice was "never ask a
5 question in Commission that you haven't already
6 provided in writing to staff". I was, okay. Took
7 that as an instruction. I was like, all right,
8 that's the rules. That's how it works around here.
9 Interesting. Only fair. I can understand.

10 So I did that for the first little
11 while. I followed the rules. That's kind of who I
12 am. And I noticed that the answers I was getting
13 really didn't answer the question. They were
14 highly political. They were talking points. And I
15 can recognize talking points when I see them
16 because I write them. That's what I do for a
17 living is I write talking points. I do messaging
18 for stakeholders. You know, I create
19 presentations. This is what I do for a living.

20 And I realized they weren't answering
21 my questions, which annoys me to no end. And so I
22 eventually became friendly with a couple of other
23 commissioners, and I had asked I believe -- I can't
24 remember who I asked but I said, How early do you
25 send your questions in to John, and to John Manconi

1 and the team? Like, a week ahead, is that enough
2 time? And they -- I can't recall who it was, it
3 might have been Catherine McKenney, looked at me
4 horrified, and said to me, Why are you sending your
5 questions ahead of time? And I said, I was told
6 to. So I stopped doing that. And I -- if there
7 was a question that I was going to be asking with
8 specifics to budget or, you know, nitty gritty
9 information that someone -- I wouldn't expect
10 someone to have necessarily at fingertips because
11 it's unreasonable, I would give a heads up ahead of
12 time saying, Just to let you know, at the next
13 Transit Commission meeting I do plan on asking
14 several questions about Parliament Station or, you
15 know, stuff like that. Specifically, I'm going to
16 ask to walk you through a timeline on certain
17 issues in Parliament Station. So I would give a
18 heads up about that. I'm not completely unfair.

19 When it came to my questioning style,
20 rather than just blindly accepting the answer that
21 was provided to me, which was, I very quickly
22 realized, highly political answers where a lot of
23 words come out of a person's mouth but not a whole
24 lot -- they don't really answer the question. They
25 provide you the same information they provided to

1 you in the presentation but in a different order.

2 I started to be a bit bolder because I
3 was quite honestly just sick of it. What was -- my
4 thinking was, what's the point of me being a
5 commissioner if you're not going to answer my
6 questions? It's disrespectful.

7 So I started being a bit more forceful
8 with my questions. I would ask a question, and I
9 would script out my questions because I actually
10 don't love public speaking. I get very nervous.
11 And so I would script out my questions and take it
12 point by point by point to lead to a conclusion
13 that I was -- I already knew what the answer was or
14 I suspected what the answer was. And if someone
15 wasn't answering my question I would call them out
16 on it and say, That's great information but you
17 didn't answer my question, so I'm going to repeat
18 it for you.

19 And that -- I was never rude, I don't
20 think, just a bit more forceful with my questions.
21 I didn't always get the answers. It was a lot of,
22 Oh, we'll come back to you, commissioner, and then
23 they never did.

24 But, yes, so that's how I had to learn
25 my questioning, but I'm very fortunate that when I

1 worked for the Ministry of the Attorney General,
2 the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, I
3 worked at the Ottawa courthouse, and a lot of my
4 friends are Crown counsel and defence counsel, so I
5 got to see them in action and how they asked
6 questions, and so I just emulated that, to be quite
7 honest with you.

8 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned that you
9 haven't been able to see an unredacted version of
10 the project agreement, and I know that I don't have
11 to date right in front of you, I believe you
12 tweeted about not being able to see an unredacted
13 version of the maintenance agreement.

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Correct.

15 MS. MCGRANN: What information were you
16 looking for, we'll start with the project
17 agreement, that you weren't able to locate in the
18 publicly available versions of those agreements?

19 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So when it comes
20 to the information that was available, in the
21 maintenance agreement, I mean, there are sections
22 of that that are redacted that I would like to see
23 because I don't know what they are. I don't know
24 what they pertain to. When it comes to the project
25 agreement, I do believe that most of that is -- the

1 redaction is minimal on those, but I was trying to
2 make a point, to be honest with you.

3 I was making a point that as a
4 commissioner who signed an oath of office and a
5 comprehensive NDA and has to make decisions and
6 vote on motions and vote on budgets that I should
7 be allowed to see the same documents that my
8 council colleagues are able to see.

9 When you have 12 people on a commission
10 total including the chair, 8 of which are City
11 councillors and 4 of which are citizen
12 commissioners, when 8 of the 12 can see 100 percent
13 of the document but 4 of the 12 can't, that's an
14 unfair advantage, and when I'm making decisions, I
15 want to have all of the information not just what
16 I'm allowed to see.

17 In terms of the maintenance contract, I
18 had a lot of questions about that maintenance
19 contract and what is -- what is required and how
20 often are inspections required and, you know,
21 unfortunately, a lot of the information is a bit --
22 it's a bit -- I can't think of the word -- fuzzy.
23 That's not the word I was looking for, but we're
24 going with fuzzy. It's not clear.

25 MS. MCGRANN: Sometimes when you look

1 away from the word you're looking for it comes to
2 you, so if it comes back to you later, you can just
3 let us know.

4 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yeah. I
5 apologize. We're going with fuzzy. And so there
6 was -- to be honest with you, some of it was me
7 just making a point, to be honest with you. As I
8 said, I'm very bluntly honest. I was making a
9 point that it was a continuation of a theme that I
10 felt had been ongoing since before this line had
11 been launched that only certain amounts of
12 information, only certain information was being
13 shared with the Commission at large.

14 I can't speak to what the chair was
15 told, but the commission at large -- because to be
16 clear on that, the chair of the Commission is
17 typically told a lot more information, and he or
18 she, but in this case it's a he, is the first to
19 know the information prior to the rest of the
20 Commission. That's apparently a privilege that the
21 chair enjoys. That's fine. I'm not going to, you
22 know, get twisted up about that. But when it came
23 to the maintenance agreement, and the project
24 agreement, but the maintenance agreement
25 specifically because obviously we have a

1 maintenance company contracted for 30 years, I was
2 trying to make a point that as a commissioner, I
3 can't see who has oversight of and gives direction
4 to OC Transpo, and by extension, RTM, Rideau
5 Transit Maintenance, I can't see the maintenance
6 agreement. So forget it if you're a member of the
7 public who pays for this. You can't see it either,
8 and that was the point I was trying to make. I was
9 trying to initiate change and transparency by
10 making a point.

11 MS. MCGRANN: All right. In addition
12 to the point that you sought to make, was there any
13 specific information in or related to the
14 maintenance agreement that you went looking for
15 that you weren't able to obtain?

16 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I don't recall.

17 MS. MCGRANN: What benefits do you
18 think would flow from having a complete version of
19 maintenance agreements publicly available?

20 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: In terms of
21 benefits, I think accountability, transparency.
22 When it comes to -- when it comes to government in
23 general, governments serve, you know, upon the will
24 and the trust of the people. And so when it comes
25 to public transit where people are getting onto

1 these vehicles that they do not control, that
2 someone else is controlling, they're putting their
3 safety, their lives in the hands of others who have
4 made decisions on their behalf. So making those
5 documents public would be -- my argument has always
6 been would be a really good step towards
7 transparency.

8 In my opinion and in my experience with
9 this contract with RTG being a public private
10 partnership, a P3, and I admit that prior to
11 becoming a commissioner and dealing with the P3
12 with RTG, I didn't even know what a P3 was, to be
13 honest with you. So I admit that. I admit my
14 ignorance. It's embarrassing but in my experience
15 with this P3, it's shrouded in secrecy, some of
16 which I don't fully understand why it's so secret.
17 Documents that are considered RTG's property and
18 therefore their confidential business information,
19 documents that we should be allowed to see as
20 commissioners at the very least, but also as the
21 public, and so the benefit for me would be
22 transparency because the second the public gets a
23 whiff of secrecy when it comes to a public good or
24 the government, the trust then starts to erode, and
25 that is something that has been a continuing theme

1 throughout the saga of the LRT is that public trust
2 has just eroded.

3 They don't trust OC Transpo. We don't
4 trust the information that's coming from RTM
5 because the information is parsed and it's not
6 necessarily the full information. If I have to as
7 a commissioner work incredibly hard to ask the
8 right questions and be quite forceful about it then
9 you're not being transparent and forcing you into
10 transparency, and to me, that's just not
11 acceptable.

12 MS. MCGRANN: You spoke about I'll call
13 it a decrease in public trust in OC Transpo and
14 RTM. What leads you to draw the conclusion that
15 public trust is decreased?

16 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So I use a lot of
17 my own experience as a commissioner, but I also --
18 I am very active on social media. And I have a
19 decent number of followers, and people tweet at me,
20 they DM me, they send me emails on my City account.

21 I've had people message me through
22 Facebook even though my Facebook is locked down.
23 They try to get in touch with me any way they can.
24 If they know my mom, they'll call my mom. So I
25 listen to people.

1 I was taking public transit every
2 single day, bus and train, and then train and bus
3 to get home. And I would listen to people. I
4 wasn't necessarily in the conversation but I was
5 eavesdropping, I admit it. And, you know,
6 sometimes people would recognize me on the train or
7 on the bus and they would come over and talk to me
8 and tell me about their experiences.

9 And so I listen to people. You know, I
10 obviously know that social media is not a
11 representative sample of public opinion, however, I
12 literally was on the line every day with people,
13 and people are upset, and they would tell me about
14 it.

15 And my own trust in OC Transpo senior
16 management and RTM specifically has eroded greatly
17 from the time of when I naively started as a
18 commissioner until now at the almost end of my
19 term.

20 MS. MCGRANN: I'm going to bounce
21 around a little bit with my questions here so just
22 bear with me.

23 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That's fine.

24 MS. MCGRANN: I had asked you if
25 yourself at the Transit Commission was prepared for

1 handover of the system. Did you feel that the City
2 was prepared for handover of the system?

3 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That is a complex
4 question, phrased simply, but a complex question.
5 I don't know if I can fully answer that question
6 because the only exposure I really had was as a
7 Transit commissioner. And, of course, since the
8 line launched until now, a lot of information has
9 come out as a result of the articles that were
10 written based on access to information requests.

11 Based on those articles, it has become
12 very clear in my mind, at the very least in my
13 opinion, that there were those in the City of
14 Ottawa working within the City of Ottawa in
15 management positions, in leadership positions, that
16 knew a heck of a lot more than others.

17 So from the face of it, I would say no,
18 the City was not ready. I think the City thought
19 it was ready. I think OC Transpo thought they were
20 ready. They had all these shiny plans. We know
21 exactly what we're doing with bus systems and it's
22 going to go for three weeks and then we're not
23 going to need parallel service anymore. We've got
24 these R1's, these replacement busses, and
25 everything's fine. And it wasn't.

1 And so in my review and in my opinion,
2 no, the City wasn't prepared, but I think that
3 there were those -- based on information that has
4 come out subsequent, I think that there were those
5 within the City that were crossing fingers that
6 nothing went wrong, would go wrong, but they knew
7 that it wasn't necessarily ready.

8 MS. MCGRANN: I'm going to share my
9 screen again. It's a PDF printout of an article
10 that you wrote in the Ottawa Citizen. It looks
11 like it was published on September 24, 2021.

12 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I remember it.

13 MS. MCGRANN: So I just want to show
14 you the screen. I'm going to scroll down and just
15 give you a chance to take a look at this. Do you
16 remember writing this article? Tell me if you'd
17 like me to scroll down any further?

18 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I do recall
19 writing this article, yes. The first time I had
20 ever done anything like that in my life.

21 MS. MCGRANN: So we'll attach this as
22 Exhibit 2 to your transcript.

23 EXHIBIT 2:

24 Article dated September 24, 2021

25 MS. MCGRANN: The first thing I want to

1 ask you about is -- I'll highlight this -- so you
2 list in the second paragraph here a list of issues
3 which are doors, brakes, overheads, catenary
4 systems, computers glitches, frozen switches, train
5 tunnels that smell like feces, flat wheels, cracked
6 wheels, cracked tracks, couplers, sensors, axle
7 bearings, and two derailments.

8 I'm going to stop sharing the screen
9 for now.

10 The Commission's mandate is to look
11 into commercial and technical circumstances that
12 led to or contributed to the breakdowns and
13 derailments. So we'll leave aside station owners,
14 and we'll leave aside derailments for now.

15 In your experience as a Transit
16 commissioner and a user of the system, which of
17 these issues caused the biggest disruptions for
18 riders?

19 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sorry, did you say
20 we're leaving aside the derailments?

21 MS. MCGRANN: For now, yes.

22 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: To be quite honest
23 with you, I don't think you can point to one as the
24 biggest disruption. I think it was -- in the
25 beginning it was the doors that weren't calibrated

1 properly, and so if someone even breathed next to
2 it, it would stick open and they couldn't get it
3 closed, and then the line shut down, and that was
4 just from the first few weeks.

5 You know, switches freezing, the
6 switches in the east end near Blair Station was
7 commonly were the one's that froze. Flat wheels.
8 I mean quite honestly, when you look back at it,
9 you think that that's some sort of odd poem that
10 I've written about all the things that could
11 possibly go wrong with a line, and it's really sad
12 that those were some of the issues that we were
13 facing.

14 I'm not laughing because it's funny,
15 it's just sort of absurd. That's my absurdity
16 laugh.

17 I can't speak to one specific issue
18 that caused the biggest issues for customers. What
19 I will say though is this: It's the compounding of
20 those issues that it was constantly going on and
21 that it was never the same issue that would come up
22 or rarely the same issue that would come up. It
23 was new issues, and we're still having new issues.

24 And so it would compound people's
25 frustration and, you know, people I would refer to

1 anecdotally from people that they were losing their
2 spots in daycare because they could not guarantee
3 that they would be there at 5 p.m. to pick up their
4 child because they couldn't rely on the LRT to be
5 running properly. It compounded a frustration that
6 had been ongoing in Ottawa in terms of public
7 transit.

8 It's important to remember that prior
9 to the LRT launching, during the construction phase
10 a lot of bus routes changed. And the express
11 routes that you could take from the suburbs to get
12 straight downtown, that's the express, you would
13 pay more for the pass, those disappeared. Bus
14 routes changed. Frequency changed. They were
15 changing quite often. People were really
16 frustrated with the subpar bus service. But the
17 great white hope was the LRT, and that's how it was
18 sold was don't worry, I know this sucks right now,
19 but it will all be worth it when the LRT launches.

20 So you can imagine the compounded
21 frustration of years of subpar public transit
22 service but being told it's okay, everything will
23 be fine once the LRT runs. You'd be amazed at how
24 much shorter your commute is and how easy it is,
25 and then the LRT launches and within a month,

1 people -- there are hundreds or thousands of people
2 just standing around or walking to their downtown
3 offices, there's people jumping fences.

4 So when you ask me which one issue was
5 the worst, I know I'm not really answering the
6 question, and I apologize for that, but the reason
7 is that I don't think you can point to one issue.

8 It is the simultaneous issue upon issue
9 upon issue. Like, it's exhausting as a Transit
10 commissioner and as a transit rider, not ever
11 knowing if I was going to get home on time.

12 And at the same time, in both my roles
13 as Transit commissioner and a transit rider, losing
14 faith and trust in public officials to tell us
15 what's going on, to fix the problem, and really not
16 -- in the beginning not acknowledging that there
17 was a problem, and there's nothing that ticks
18 people in Ottawa off more than not acknowledging
19 how they feel about things and what they're seeing,
20 blaming customers for the doors with the door
21 problems and stuff like that.

22 So I couldn't point to one of them.
23 It's a compounding problem.

24 MS. MCGRANN: What has the Transit
25 Commission done to address the issues that you have

1 seen come out over the life of the operation of the
2 system?

3 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So you probably
4 don't know, but that's also a complex question. So
5 to sort of understand the Transit Commission and
6 how it behaves, how we work is you need to
7 understand the makeup of the Commission. Like all
8 other committees and commissions in Ottawa, for the
9 City of Ottawa the Transit Commission is stacked
10 with councillors who -- not all of them, but a
11 majority stacked with councillors and a couple of
12 citizen commissioners, not me, who are loyal to
13 Mayor Watson. They are referred to in the City as
14 the Watson Club, or the WC if you're running out of
15 characters on Twitter. And the Commission is
16 stacked, absolutely stacked.

17 So unless you have the support of those
18 members, and by support, I mean unless Mayor Watson
19 supports what you're trying to do, whatever motion,
20 whatever transparency motion that you're trying to
21 do, you can't get anything done. It is a
22 dysfunctional Commission, at best.

23 And so when it comes to issues, how we
24 dealt with issues, one thing that was done was
25 Councillor Brockington's motion to have line one

1 and bus service update added as a standing item on
2 the agenda, and I supported him in that a hundred
3 percent, because the chair refused it, and it had
4 to go to a vote. And, surprisingly, that vote
5 passed. So perhaps others were thinking for
6 themselves that day.

7 And quite honestly, all we can do is
8 call attention to the issues on behalf of riders
9 and taxpayers. So for agenda item number one, line
10 one update. Each Commission member after the
11 presentation gets a five-minute period for
12 questions in the first round, and then you go to
13 the back of the line, and then you get another
14 five. You can have as many five-minute rounds as
15 you want essentially until the chair gets angry and
16 cuts you off, but essentially you get five minutes.

17 So I learned very quickly to structure
18 my five minutes to talk about the issues, to get
19 more information on the -- what was being presented
20 to us in the PowerPoint deck.

21 So, for example, I know you said we
22 weren't talking about derailments, but this is just
23 an example. So after the September derailment, I
24 believe that happened on a Sunday -- Saturday or
25 Sunday -- we had a Commission meeting on the

1 Monday. It's usually on a Wednesday, but for some
2 reason it was on a Monday. And the deck, the
3 presentation, the presentation deck along with
4 verbal submissions at the presentation, they kept
5 referring to it as the stopped train. Train came
6 to a stop.

7 I mean, sure, that is not untrue. It's
8 not untrue. It did come to a stop after it took
9 out a lot of infrastructure and a communications
10 box. And the only reason it actually came to a
11 stop was because the communications box was
12 destroyed and the train lost communication with the
13 control centre. But sure.

14 The only way we got that information
15 about the control centre and losing communication
16 was after three different commissioners and
17 councillors asked the question and finally I
18 believe it was Councillor Leaper who just really
19 asked the pointed questions about, you know, would
20 you agree with me that it was because the train
21 struck the communication box, lost communication
22 with control centre and that's what brought it to a
23 stop and if that hadn't happened, the train would
24 have kept going.

25 So it's information like that where

1 it's very what I call vanilla or generic
2 information. The train came to a stop. Sure it
3 did. Absolutely it did. But it's the
4 circumstances that led up to that train coming to a
5 stop that are important.

6 And so what are we able to do as a
7 commission? We are able to ask a lot of questions
8 on behalf of the public. The public can review the
9 meetings, especially now that they're virtual, they
10 can view them on YouTube live, bit of a delay, but
11 maybe 20 seconds.

12 We -- some of us, the more progressive
13 commissioners and councillors have taken to -- if
14 we can't get anywhere with OC Transpo, we will take
15 to the media to try to put on some pressure. It's
16 not my preferred way of doing things, but it is the
17 only way that we can actually get things done, it
18 seems.

19 An example of that, after the second
20 derailment, the City announced they would be hiring
21 a third-party contractor to oversee the relaunch of
22 line one. They specifically put the wording in
23 there that it would be a third-party independent
24 contractor. That was very -- they kept emphasizing
25 the word independent. Independent is good, right?

1 And then we got the email saying that they've hired
2 an independent -- right in the email subject line
3 it was independent contractor.

4 It took less than five minutes on
5 Google to find out that that contractor who was
6 "independent" that they hired had actually worked
7 on line one. So not so independent.

8 And the City -- the City was defending
9 their choice until a week of media and media
10 questions and media appearances by myself and
11 councillors who were also commissioners, and the
12 public pressure became too much, and the public
13 started writing to the mayor, and the pressure
14 became too much, and they reversed course, and they
15 got rid of that company.

16 I have no idea if that company has
17 expertise, that wasn't the issue. And they hired
18 TRA who currently work for the City under contract
19 and are actually independent.

20 So because -- my long-winded answer and
21 I apologize, but my answer, my short version of
22 your answer is because our Commission is
23 dysfunctional in its makeup, and it is the mayor
24 who decides who goes on each Commission committee,
25 myself and other commissioners who are not members

1 of the so called Watson Club have to resort to
2 tactics including really hard questioning and using
3 the media to create public outcry and public
4 pressure to put that pressure on the elected
5 officials to do what's right and to look into
6 things, to provide things like free transit as a
7 compensation for pain and suffering, essentially.

8 So yeah, sorry. That was a really
9 long-winded answer.

10 MS. MCGRANN: So a couple of things.
11 I've got some follow-up questions, but before I ask
12 them, I should clarify that when I said I didn't
13 want your answer to pertain to derailments, it was
14 only specifically with respect to the question of
15 which of these were the biggest or most problematic
16 for riders.

17 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Going forward it
18 would have been obvious.

19 MS. MCGRANN: Going forward you can
20 assume that I invite you to speak about anything.
21 If I want to specifically focus, I'll make that
22 clear for that question alone.

23 Let me ask you a couple of questions
24 about the Watson Club and then I'm going to come
25 back to what the Transit Commission did or could

1 have done in response to the breakdowns in
2 derailment.

3 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sure.

4 MS. MCGRANN: You can come at this
5 whichever way is easier for you, councillors who
6 are in the club or councillors who are not in the
7 club, but help me understand who is in the club?

8 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Okay. So the list
9 is actually shorter who's not.

10 MS. MCGRANN: So tell me who is not in
11 the club then.

12 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So if I can do
13 this by memory. I may have to pull up the City
14 website. I apologize if I do.

15 MS. MCGRANN: The best you can do from
16 memory is just fine for today.

17 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Who is not in the
18 club: Catherine McKenney, Riley Brockington,
19 Shawn Menard, Jeff Leiper. Sorry, I'm going to --
20 I'm going to get it. Mathieu Fleury, Rawlson King,
21 Carol Anne Meehan. It depends on the day. I think
22 that's it. I may be missing one or two, but I
23 think that's about it. There's not that many.
24 They sometimes refer to themselves as the
25 progressive caucus, the people who are not in the

1 Watson Club.

2 MS. MCGRANN: In the article that we
3 looked at a few minutes ago or a while ago at this
4 point, you wrote with respect to the Watson Club,
5 "step out of line, vote the wrong way, or say
6 something wrong in the media and you're out in the
7 cold." Do you remember writing that?

8 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I do.

9 MS. MCGRANN: When you said, "you're
10 out in the cold," what do you mean by that?

11 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That was reference
12 to Carol Anne Meehan.

13 MS. MCGRANN: Reference to what about
14 Carol Anne Meehan?

15 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Carol Anne Meehan
16 had been very well liked by Jim Watson and the
17 Watson Club. I wouldn't call her a central member
18 at the time, but she was certainly someone they
19 could count on for votes. And I think it's
20 important contextually to understand what being a
21 Watson Club member means. And so being a Watson
22 Club member means that you have access to money,
23 campaign money donations from developers, large
24 developers, land developers here in Ottawa.

25 There are several organizations who

1 have compiled developer donation information to
2 candidates. It's public information. And there
3 are some councillors who are in the Watson Club.
4 Most of the councillors in the Watson Club have a
5 large amount of money that comes from developers,
6 developers -- employees who work for developers,
7 family members, the tendrils are -- there's quite a
8 few.

9 So Carol Anne Meehan -- I'll just back
10 up again. Those donations and the support of
11 Mayor Watson and his network because, of course, he
12 hasn't always been just mayor. He's been in
13 Ontario politics and was mayor prior to that. He
14 has a lot of political connections. They help you
15 get elected. Money help you get elected,
16 unfortunately, in this city. And connections,
17 networks, you know, access to 200 door knockers --
18 that's people to door knock, sorry -- that's a lot
19 for people who are running for a municipal office.
20 You have all that.

21 If you are chosen by the mayor then --
22 when you are thinking of running, if you are a
23 Watson candidate, you have access to all of that.
24 You do events with him. He might come into your
25 neighbourhood and door knock with you, and, of

1 course, up until recently, he was a pretty beloved
2 mayor. But the only thing that you really have to
3 promise, from what I understand, is you never say
4 anything against him in the media, and you don't
5 vote against him no matter what.

6 So taking the long way around, again,
7 Carol Anne Meehan, from conversations that I have
8 had with her, she was favoured by the Watson Club.
9 I can't say for sure that she was a member of
10 because she fell from that position very quickly
11 when the LRT issues after revenue services
12 availability started happening.

13 She said in an interview "where's Jim
14 in all of this?" Because at this point the mayor
15 had been very silent other than to tell customers
16 to leave "the damn doors alone". Blaming customers
17 for the door fault. So Carol Anne said "where's
18 Jim in all of this?" And she quickly lost the
19 favour of the mayor.

20 Apparently there was some sort of email
21 or text message from the mayor himself. I didn't
22 see it, but it was -- essentially she was out.

23 And after that, she was on her own.
24 She had no support from those in the Watson Club
25 anymore. And so that -- that couple of lines that

1 I wrote about "if you go against him, you're out in
2 the cold", that was specifically in reference to
3 Carol Anne.

4 MS. MCGRANN: Now, I did warn you I was
5 going to bounce around, so I'm going to bounce
6 around.

7 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That's fine. It
8 doesn't bother me.

9 MS. MCGRANN: Hopping back to what you
10 said about the work that you and others did with
11 the media to raise concerns about the third party
12 independent contractor that was retained, do you
13 remember the name of the contractor that was
14 initially retained that raised the concerns?

15 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: No, I'm sorry, I
16 don't. I'd have to look through my emails, but no,
17 I don't.

18 MS. MCGRANN: That's okay. I
19 understand that the concern was that this
20 contractor was not independent due to the fact that
21 they had done some work on the project. Help me
22 understand why that was an issue for you and
23 others?

24 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sure. So, again,
25 it goes back to the foundation of transparency and

1 trust. Rebuilding trust because at this point
2 trust was gone. Two derailments, trust was gone.
3 So the City was hiring this independent contractor,
4 "independent contract" and that's how they always
5 referred to it as an independent safety evaluator
6 or safety contractor. And always the word was
7 independent was being used.

8 And they were using that word in order
9 to, in my view, to rebuild trust with the public
10 that we understand, we see there's problems with
11 RTM. Here's what we're going to do. We're going
12 to bring in an independent evaluator, independent
13 contractor, they're going to oversee RTM, whereas I
14 usually refer it to in Transit Commission baby-sit.

15 And so that's great. That's an amazing
16 PR move. It's also a good strategic move. I mean
17 I do strategic communications and engagements, so I
18 understand a strategic move when I see one.
19 Amazing move.

20 Where things, pardon the pun, went off
21 the rail was when they hired this other company,
22 and I do apologize, I cannot remember their name.
23 Flash in the pan for me, unfortunately. And in the
24 subject line of the email from Steve Kanellakos,
25 the City manager, said independent third party

1 contractor, and then I'm one of those people that
2 if I see a name, a company name, or a person's name
3 that I don't recognize, I Google them. It's the
4 first thing I do.

5 And it was right on this company's web
6 page as one of their accomplishments was their work
7 on line one. So not only had they worked on line
8 one, but they were using their work on line one to
9 show what an amazing company they are and, in my
10 opinion, solicit new business. Hire us, we worked
11 on line one. I'm not sure that really works out so
12 well for them, but that's their choice.

13 So my concern was two-fold. Number
14 one, if you worked on line one, I don't care what
15 you did on it, you are no longer -- you have a
16 conflict of interest. You can't oversee -- you
17 lose the forest for the trees, right? And you
18 can't oversee and see all the issues with a line or
19 with a system when you've been involved in building
20 the system.

21 Like, when I try to relate a thing to
22 my own life when I'm trying to think it through,
23 it's like but when I'm writing a speech for one of
24 my bosses and I've been looking at the speech for
25 so long that I just no longer see any of the

1 problems with it, right. My next step when I
2 finish a draft is send it off to somebody who's
3 never seen it before, so they can see -- they'll
4 see the errors because they'll be glaring to them,
5 but to me, my eyes just skim over it. Same idea.

6 So in my view there was a conflict of
7 interest. You cannot sit in judgement or oversee a
8 system that you worked on. In my view, and I
9 believe I speak for some of my colleagues, this
10 isn't just a management issue. It's a systemic
11 issue with this system.

12 The other problem that I had, and I
13 know from speaking with my colleagues on
14 Commission, you can't tell me that someone is
15 independent when they're not when they've worked on
16 line one and to literally -- I think it was in
17 caps, all caps independent, you know, in the email,
18 that's insulting. Like, I'm not stupid. I know
19 how to use Google. And so it was making a point.

20 If you're going to try to rebuild
21 public trust, you need to do it the right way and
22 not take shortcuts that may benefit you or may just
23 be easiest for you.

24 I understand from what I'm told by City
25 staff that there aren't that many rail expert

1 companies with light rail experience, but my
2 response, I can't imagine that every single one of
3 them worked on line one, so there's got to be one
4 out there that's willing to come help us, and low
5 and behold there was, we got TRA.

6 MS. MCGRANN: So with respect to the
7 work that TRA's been doing, you identified PR
8 benefits and strategic communication benefits from
9 their retainer by the City. As a Transit
10 commissioner and as a user of the system, have you
11 seen substantive benefits from their work for the
12 City?

13 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes, I have. I
14 think that first of all, they're very transparent.
15 They're very open about the work that they're
16 doing, about the difficulties that they have sort
17 of faced with RTM. They -- I mean, they've been
18 around since shortly after -- so probably since
19 October, and they're still around. And so we're
20 into a new fiscal year, and they're still around.

21 There certainly have been some
22 improvements with the line, however, we can't seem
23 to make it a week without there being a breakdown.
24 There's been two this week, and it's only Thursday.
25 There was one earlier today that I'm not even sure

1 that it's resolved right now because I haven't been
2 looking at my phone.

3 So there have been improvements. I
4 will say this, and I've said this publicly to TRA
5 with RTM at the meeting because for some time RTM
6 came to Commission meetings and then they stopped.
7 It gives me a level of comfort knowing that TRA is
8 providing some oversight to RTM because, and I've
9 said this publicly, I would say to RTM's faces but
10 we were virtual, but their faces were there, I
11 don't trust RTM with my safety on that line. And
12 as long as RTM is running line one, I will not be
13 on it. And I've said that to them publicly and to
14 their face.

15 TRA, I appreciate their oversight. I
16 don't necessarily think that they are the magic
17 solution to the problems of line one because the
18 problems lie with RTM and within the system itself,
19 in my opinion.

20 MS. MCGRANN: What, if anything, do you
21 see TRA doing that OC Transpo or others at the City
22 were not doing before?

23 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So from what I can
24 tell, again, the sharing of information is
25 apparently not a natural state for OC Transpo

1 senior management. From what I can glean from the
2 presentations, from questions that I'm able to ask
3 to TRA representatives because they join our
4 transition Commission meetings, TRA has really dug
5 deep into RTM. They have looked at all of their
6 documentation, all of their processes, all of --
7 they found a lot of holes.

8 Again, because they're an outside firm,
9 they're not familiar with it, there's not that
10 familiarity blindness, right? So that's what's
11 great of TRA. So they have -- they have provided I
12 think a level of expertise and organizational
13 expertise that I don't think RTM possesses.

14 So, for example, they have been able to
15 identify where more leadership was needed, more
16 training, more management, almost more
17 micromanagement, to be honest with you, was needed
18 within RTM. Micro management is not necessarily a
19 bad thing especially if you're dealing with
20 vehicles that carry humans. And so I think TRA has
21 brought that expertise.

22 My concern is that I'm not entirely
23 sure RTM is marketing, and I'm not entirely sure
24 that when TRA leaves that we're not going to be in
25 the same position that we were in prior to them

1 arriving.

2 MS. MCGRANN: I have some more
3 questions for you but before I go any further, I
4 will just pause and ask my colleague Ms. McLellan,
5 do you have any follow-up questions on anything
6 that we've discussed so far?

7 MS. MCLELLAN: No.

8 MS. MCGRANN: Ms. Wright-Gilbert, you
9 mentioned something with problems lying with RTM.
10 What informed your view that problems lie with RTM?

11 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So a bunch of
12 things. I'll try to go through them. So RTM --
13 when I try to explain to people about RTM, people
14 are like, well, what's RTM? So I explain it to
15 them.

16 Again, I try to explain things the way
17 I would explain to my parents who are a bit older.
18 RTM is like a general contractor. So you are
19 renovating your home. You're not going to be the
20 one that's necessarily dealing with all the
21 subcontractors, the plumbers, the electricians, the
22 tiling guys. You hire a general contractor who
23 then hires subcontractors, right?

24 So when I'm trying to explain RTM, they
25 are the general contractor. RTM itself as an

1 entity doesn't necessarily have the expertise
2 required to maintain line one. What they've done
3 is they have subcontractor partners such as Alstom
4 is one of them and others that they subcontracted
5 the expertise out to. That's sort of how I see it.

6 Where that becomes a problem is that we
7 now have a bit of a game of telephone when it comes
8 to crucial information. The subcontractors are the
9 ones who are out on the line. If there's a
10 problem, a major problem, a minor problem, those
11 subcontractors do not report to OC Transpo, they
12 report into RTM, and then RTM has to proactively
13 share that information with OC Transpo, so it's a
14 bit of game of broken telephone because the
15 information is being passed from person to person
16 to person. And it's my understanding that OC
17 Transpo does not communicate directly with the
18 subcontractors such as Allstone and others. So
19 there's a communication problem.

20 There is also a problem with RTM that,
21 in my opinion, they don't care. And I don't say
22 that lightly.

23 So after the second derailment in
24 September, I started to really feel as though I
25 couldn't trust the information that was being

1 provided to me by OT Transpo and RTM that the
2 information, as I referenced before, the train came
3 to a stop. Lovely. Sure it did, but there's some
4 context there that's needed.

5 I felt that I could no longer trust the
6 information coming from RTM or OC Transpo, and I've
7 said that publically. This is not news to most
8 people.

9 However, we have a third source of
10 information, and that is the Transportation Safety
11 Board. And they were investigating the
12 derailments, both of them, and would release public
13 reports on their website, nice and transparent,
14 with a person's name attached to them and
15 everything. I mean this was like mint
16 transparency. I was really impressed.

17 When I read one of Transportation
18 Safety Board reports with respect to the September
19 derailment, I think it was an interim report, and
20 in that report, it's online, and I'm paraphrasing,
21 that one of the train cars, one of the LRV's that
22 derailed in September had previously been
23 identified as having issues as a result of the
24 August derailment and had been in service -- been
25 in for service for those issues, and five or six

1 days prior, prior to the September derailment was
2 being worked on, but a couple of things happened.
3 One, the afternoon shift guys didn't tighten the
4 bolts on the gigger box. And two, they didn't tell
5 the next shift that they didn't tighten the bolts,
6 and so the next shift assumed that the afternoon
7 guys had tightened the bolts.

8 It sounds like a really awful comedy,
9 but unfortunately it's a bit of a nightmare, and
10 then on top of that, and this is in my view the
11 most egregious thing that I have heard that RTM has
12 done thus far -- again, it's in my opinion -- what
13 came out of that report was that that train that
14 derailed five days later, they couldn't find the
15 work order for it. So instead of looking for the
16 work order or getting a new work order saying what
17 needs to be done and signing off that all these
18 things have been done, they used a work order from
19 another train and they signed off on it.

20 To me, that is inexcusable. And it's
21 just in my opinion, I'm not a lawyer, I'm not --
22 you know, it's inexcusable. You want to talk about
23 the erosion of public trust.

24 And when I read that, I knew I couldn't
25 trust RTM. They don't care. And I don't think

1 they know enough to care. I don't think they know
2 what to do, what they've been asked to do. They're
3 a company that isn't well organized, but at the
4 same time they were chosen by the City of Ottawa.

5 So when I get asked where does the
6 blame lie? That's a good question. That can't lie
7 to one person, but it's certainly -- you know, I
8 don't trust RTM, and I don't trust the information
9 coming out of the City of Ottawa either, to be
10 honest with you.

11 MS. MCGRANN: You've given me this
12 example that you just provided about why you've
13 concluded that RTM doesn't care. Are there any
14 other major contributors to that view?

15 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Yes. You know,
16 it's the fact that we have continuing problems,
17 over and over and over again problems from RTM and
18 they just can't seem to get their act together.

19 You see in media reports of the
20 complaining about the oversight from TRA and,
21 again, it's part of court filings, so I mean take
22 that with a grain of salt but, you know, if I were
23 a maintenance company that was in trouble and their
24 line had derailed twice, I would be happy for the
25 help. And you would think that after the August

1 derailment, everybody in that company would have
2 been on their A game to make sure that that didn't
3 happen again.

4 A train derailment when you have a rail
5 system is the most serious thing that can happen.
6 You would think they would be on their A game and
7 making sure that double-checking, triple-checking,
8 everything. And instead, they used another train's
9 work order and signed off on it. And five, six
10 days later, that train derailed, seriously derailed
11 with passengers on board. And so to me, I think
12 that they just don't care.

13 They have an ironclad contract with us
14 for 30 years for 5 million a month. To get out of
15 that contract, I understand, and I don't know all
16 of it because I'm not in Fedco, but I understand it
17 would be very expensive for the City to get out of
18 that contract, and obviously RTM knows that.

19 MS. MCGRANN: It looks like you tweeted
20 on March 16th, something along the lines of "we
21 bought a lemon." Do you know the tweet that I'm
22 referring to?

23 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I've tweeted that
24 several times, but yes.

25 MS. MCGRANN: What are you referring to

1 when you use the term "lemon"?

2 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sure. So solely
3 in my opinion, it may be shared by others, but I
4 speak for myself only, and it's my opinion, that
5 the system that we bought as a result of this
6 public private partnership it may look fancy and
7 shiny on the outside, but I think that it is
8 inadequate and cheaply done on the inside.

9 So outside being the seats, the trains
10 are shiny, there's artwork at the stations, that's
11 great. But stations are outside. Open air and
12 it's Ottawa. It's cold. It's poorly designed.
13 There's questions -- I have a lot of questions with
14 respect to the track, how the track was laid down.
15 I'm not the only one who has these questions
16 whether or not the track was laid improperly and
17 that's why we've had a lot of issues with the
18 cracking track, and they've had to do, I don't know
19 the technical term, but essentially that there's a
20 lot of curves on the track, and a curve is the last
21 thing that you want on an LRT track, and we have a
22 lot of them. And where the track was built up,
23 especially St. Laurent and Hurdman where the track
24 was built up, it's very noisy there. It has to do
25 with how it was built up and while the line was

1 shut down, they supposedly fixed that. I haven't
2 been on the train since, so I have no idea.

3 The trains themselves they seem to have
4 a lot of issues. They don't like it when it's
5 cold, or raining, or sunny, or warm. And so, you
6 know, we have issues with the overhead catenary
7 system that the cold caused a clip to move a
8 millimetre and that took out four trains and closed
9 the line down.

10 In short, I believe that this train is
11 not built for the system that -- the train itself
12 is not built for the system that it's on, and the
13 system itself, the infrastructure, the stations or
14 the tracks are not built properly and are not built
15 for the environment within which it lives.

16 So yes, I think we bought a lemon in
17 terms of referring to the car guides on Lemon Aid.
18 Sorry, I'm old, and my dad used to have the book,
19 the Lemon Aid, where you read up about used cars.
20 I always had a used car until not that long ago.
21 So yes, we bought a lemon is -- sometimes I just
22 use the lemon emoticon.

23 MS. MCGRANN: Other than the issues
24 that you have seen and you've personally
25 experienced, is there anything else that informs

1 your view that both the system and the vehicles are
2 a lemon, and by that I mean any assessments that
3 you've seen, reports that you're aware of, anything
4 like that?

5 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So in terms of
6 assessments and reports, I have not seen -- my
7 opinion is based -- is based upon a couple of
8 things. It's based upon my experience with the
9 system in itself. My unpleasant experience with
10 the system itself, to be honest with you, and also
11 knowing now what I know about the train not being
12 able to pass the 12 days of testing, and apparently
13 someone moved the goalpost and it past magically.

14 You know, knowing that and knowing that
15 there were concerns even amongst City senior
16 management about the launch of this train and the
17 system itself, that's what informs my opinion.

18 When it comes to technical reports, I'm
19 intelligent and I'm educated, but when it comes to
20 technical reports, it's not my wheelhouse. For
21 example, the Transportation Safety Board reports,
22 they're quite technical. For me to truly have it
23 sink in and for me to understand and be able to
24 explain it to someone else which is to me the true
25 understanding if you can explain something to

1 someone else and be able to ask questions and
2 follow-up questions on something, I had to read
3 those reports several times. It's just not my
4 forte, technical things, to be honest with you, but
5 I have had to quickly learn about technical issues,
6 technical matters to deal with light rail transit
7 systems as a result of this, you know.

8 I'm by no means an engineer, but I have
9 had to learn all about overhead catenary and bogies
10 and terms that I've never heard before in my life.
11 So I've certainly had to do a lot of research and
12 reading on it, to be honest with you.

13 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned now knowing
14 that concerns that City senior management had with
15 the system. What were you referring to there?

16 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So I'm referring
17 to the larger mystery that's afoot that no one
18 really knows the truth about how this line got
19 launched because it was -- there's problems,
20 there's problems, it's delayed, and then magically
21 it was fine and got launched.

22 What I was referring to in my statement
23 was that, what I said before was the article that
24 was written by Joanne Chianello as a result of the
25 access to information request that she received

1 from the City where there were emails I believe
2 from John Manconi to others about the system and
3 his concerns with the system itself and launching
4 it, and also a memo that was written by Mr. Manconi
5 to City counsel and I believe Transit Commission
6 and was never sent, it was just -- it was written
7 and then it died, and we don't know how it died.
8 And so that's the information I'm referring to when
9 I say senior City officials.

10 MS. MCGRANN: We were talking earlier
11 about what the Transit Commission has done in
12 response to the breakdowns, issues with the system,
13 and derailments. In your view, is there anything
14 that the Transit Commission could have done that it
15 hasn't done to date?

16 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Sorry, this is
17 going to take me a minute.

18 I think that with the Transit
19 Commission and the state that it is and the
20 membership of it, I think that we've done -- no,
21 actually, I will say this: I think that what the
22 Transit Commission could have done should there
23 have been will for it is push for greater
24 transparency and push for better more fulsome
25 answers from officials.

1 A lot of my colleagues accept answers
2 -- I'm not even sure they're listening to the
3 answer most of the time. They've asked their
4 question. It's a sound bite, and then there's an
5 answer provided. But the answer 95 percent of the
6 time doesn't actually answer the question. It's a
7 political answer. It's fluffy. It's -- it repeats
8 the information that they just gave in the
9 presentation or in a previous answer that was
10 equally as fluffy.

11 They talk about -- they'll use buzz
12 words like leadership and our partners, and I
13 recognize a fluffy answer when I see one.

14 I really wish that the Transit
15 Commission wasn't so toothless that we weren't shut
16 down every time asking about -- for example, I
17 believe it was -- I think it was Shawn Menard at
18 one point, Councillor Shawn Menard asked a question
19 to Mr. Manconi at the time about applying lessons
20 learned from phase one of line one to phase two.
21 And, you know, how those lessons learned would be
22 applied.

23 So I'm paraphrasing question but
24 essentially the gist of it, and the chair of the
25 Commission shut the question down saying phase two

1 is a Fedco matter. You can ask that question of
2 Fedco, which of course, Councillor Menard who is
3 not a Watson Club member, is not on Fedco.

4 And so I think if the Commission was
5 allowed to actually ask questions and get answers
6 that were more than just sound bites and previously
7 approved talking points that were straight up and
8 down answers, I think that this could have been
9 taken in a very different direction because if we
10 had members on Commission who were willing to
11 really sink their teeth into this matter and to not
12 just say oh, well, it's delegated authority that
13 was OC Transpo so we'll let them handle it. Forget
14 that.

15 Obviously something is wrong. This has
16 been going on for so long, and I think if members
17 of the Commission saw -- some of the members of the
18 Commission thought a little bit harder about things
19 and asked some harder question and didn't accept
20 the fluffy answers that they got, then it's
21 entirely possible that we would be able to pass --
22 if they were allowed to think for themselves, but,
23 you know, pass motion for transparency for, you
24 know, further inquiry into what the heck is going
25 on with RTM keeping in mind that Transit Commission

1 up until recently was never allowed to communicate
2 with RTM directly.

3 We always had to go through
4 Mr. Manconi. Everything always had to go through
5 Mr. Manconi. If you didn't cc him on a email to
6 say Pat Scrimgeour who runs bus lines or is in
7 charge of that, if you didn't cc him on an email,
8 it's fine, but you were getting a response from him
9 and not Mr. Scrimgeour, or Mr. Scrimgeour would
10 respond but Mr. Manconi was copied, which I
11 understand copying your boss, but everything had to
12 go through him with RTM. And to me, that is not
13 effective communication, and it doesn't give me a
14 lot of confidence in the answers I'm being provided
15 as a commissioner.

16 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned that, I
17 don't know if I'll get this right, for some period
18 of time the Transit Commission did not communicate
19 directly with RTM. I take it that changed. I've
20 seen minutes where representatives of RTG and RTM
21 attended Transit Commission meeting. What benefits
22 do you think flowed from having those
23 representatives attend the Transit Commission
24 meetings?

25 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: That's a really

1 good question. We weren't at all allowed to
2 communicate with RTM, RTG prior to -- after, I
3 can't remember what date it was that they started
4 coming to the meetings, for quite a long time any
5 -- it was always Mr. Manconi who spoke for RTM.
6 They weren't at the meetings.

7 It was Mr. Manconi, and I pointed out
8 the fact that I didn't think that was very fair to
9 Mr. Manconi to have to speak on behalf of an entity
10 that he didn't work for. Sure, they were
11 "partners", but I just didn't think it was very
12 fair to him, to be honest with you, to have to take
13 the flack and the anger and the ire of everyone
14 when -- you know, when he didn't work for RTM.

15 And at this point, you know, the City
16 was very much repeating the mantra that what they
17 allowed was RTM is the problem. RTM is not doing
18 their job. RTM is the boogeyman.

19 So at some point RTM appeared at a
20 Commission meeting. It was last year. I just
21 can't recall the date, and I apologize. They were
22 there. And they were there -- actually no, I
23 apologize. I was mistaken because it was
24 Peter Lauch before it was -- I'm going to say the
25 other guy because I can't remember his name, but it

1 was Peter Lauch, and Mr. Lauch was -- he was
2 actually -- he was pretty open and honest at the
3 Transit Commission meetings.

4 You could tell that he wanted things to
5 go better. He wanted RTM to do better. And I
6 appreciated and respected that about him. It must
7 have been earlier than last year. It must have
8 been in -- the pandemic is messing with my brain in
9 terms of time. I apologize. It must have been in
10 2020.

11 MS. MCGRANN: I'm happy to have you
12 speak generally about your recollection of the
13 meetings to ground timing.

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Thank you. I
15 apologize. It's hard. The pandemic. I've been in
16 this house for a really long time.

17 So yeah, Mr. Lauch was the first to
18 appear at a Transit Commission meeting. I actually
19 had an opportunity to introduce myself to him --
20 this is when -- it was prior to the pandemic
21 because we were still in-person meetings and I had
22 the opportunity to introduce myself to him before
23 the meeting, and I recall saying to him, I'm going
24 to be asking you some tough questions and I'm going
25 to be really tough on you. It's not -- I want you

1 to know it's not personal. It's not about you as a
2 human being. You are the face of an entity that is
3 not serving this city. And he was really good
4 natured about it. He was really good about it.

5 Being able to ask RTM questions
6 directly, the benefit there is that you sometimes
7 get information that you certainly didn't have
8 before. And so I can remember a couple of
9 occasions certainly where they provided answers to
10 questions that I wasn't expecting because it was
11 information that I didn't have before. I had
12 generic general information from OC Transpo senior
13 management, and then I asked the question to RTM
14 and RTM provides a very specific answer about an
15 issue or timing or -- I would usually be surprised
16 by their answer. They were quite open.

17 There was a change in leadership at
18 RTM. Mr. Lauch was no longer the CEO. I forgot
19 his position, and a new person came in Mario, I
20 think his name is. A new CEO came in and he
21 started attending the meetings but he also had
22 another individual with him who was on the more
23 technical side of things.

24 Increasingly, their answers became less
25 and less specific and more akin to talking points,

1 or we don't have that information and we'll have to
2 get back to you. We'll send it to you. And then,
3 of course, they never do, ever.

4 So it was initially beneficial having
5 RTM at those meetings for me, quite honestly, to
6 ask them those specific questions in the hopes that
7 I get a little nugget of some sort of truth out of
8 them, additional information, but also so that I
9 could communicate directly to them whether it's
10 through a screen or not, but communicating directly
11 to them what I'd been hearing from the public who
12 after the second derailment, what I was hearing
13 from the public was it's not safe, I'm not getting
14 on that train.

15 I had people actually asking me, Sarah,
16 what do you think? Am I safe on that train? And I
17 couldn't answer them. In good conscience, I
18 couldn't answer them. So my answer would usually
19 be, I don't plan on riding them. Because I'm not
20 going to guarantee the safety of something when I
21 don't trust the company who's maintaining it.

22 And I have said to RTM numerous times,
23 I don't trust you. Why should the people of Ottawa
24 trust you? What are you doing so that -- to change
25 things, to make us trust you again? What are you

1 doing? What's changing? They never had an answer
2 and so -- or they had an answer but it was an
3 answer full of nothing.

4 So yes, their appearances at Transit
5 Commission for the first little while were
6 beneficial. Certainly got some information that I
7 didn't have before. But increasingly it became
8 just the same old dog and pony show answers. And
9 they have now stopped coming to Transit Commission
10 meetings as a result of the ongoing litigation, but
11 TRA does come, which is nice.

12 MS. MCGRANN: You mentioned safety and
13 concerns that others have expressed to you about
14 the safety of the system. I believe that you've
15 expressed frustration in the media because you
16 haven't been allowed to review RTG's safe return to
17 service plans, and this is going back in time a
18 little bit.

19 Have you been able to get answers to
20 questions that you had about the safe return to
21 service plan either through viewing a plan or
22 otherwise?

23 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I have not been
24 allowed to view the plan. I did put an inquiry, a
25 commissioner's inquiry at Transit Commission

1 several months ago about not being allowed to view
2 the plan because I had previously emailed with the
3 City solicitor Mr. White about, can I please see
4 the plan, the return to service plan, and was told
5 that as a citizen commissioner I'm not allowed to
6 see it.

7 I did put in a commissioner's inquiry
8 asking for the reasons behind that. I did receive
9 an answer. It was a two-part inquiry. One was
10 about another matter and then not seeing -- I
11 specifically referenced the return to service plan.

12 I didn't feel as though Mr. White's
13 response and reasoning for me not seeing the plan
14 were strong enough, and so I have actually at the
15 March 31st -- the March Transit Commission meeting
16 that just past, I have raised the response to the
17 agenda item at the April 20th Transit Commission
18 meeting where there will be a discussion and a
19 debate, because I do not feel that I should be
20 barred from seeing the return to service plan of
21 RTG simply because I'm a citizen commissioner.
22 I've signed the same documents the councillors
23 have.

24 I would have liked to see what their
25 plan was because from my understanding, there was

1 their plan, and then it went to TRA and OC Transpo
2 who weren't -- it was a lot of back and forth
3 between RTG, RTM, I conflate them, and OC Transpo
4 and TRA, back and forth, back and forth, back and
5 forth, but what I have would have liked to see was
6 what their original plan looked like. What were
7 the deficiencies in the original plan. Because
8 that could give me an idea of where some of their
9 gaps are, right? Like, then I could ask questions
10 of TRA about these gaps, but right now I don't know
11 what the gaps are. I can only guess as to what
12 they are based on my experience and what's going on
13 in the media and then general descriptions of
14 problems that I get at Transit Commission.

15 And so no, I have not seen a return to
16 service plan, and unless I can get the support of
17 my colleagues at Transit Commission, which is
18 highly unlikely because I am very unpopular with
19 Mayor Watson I will never see that return to
20 service plan because Mr. White has deemed it
21 impossible for me to see it because of my position.

22 MS. MCGRANN: What was the Transit
23 Commission's role in the return to service after
24 the second derailment?

25 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: Well, it sort of

1 brings us back around to the delegated authority.
2 So a lot of the delegated authority or all of the
3 delegated authority, to be honest with you, of
4 operations of OC Transpo including line one is
5 delegated to OC Transpo senior management as well
6 as to City manager Steve Kanellakos.

7 So when it comes to the return to
8 service, we were provided updates. We were able to
9 ask questions at meetings. We could ask questions
10 by email, though if you asked too many questions or
11 your question isn't something that perhaps the
12 chair wants answered, he will smack you down and
13 tell you don't bother with them when they're trying
14 to work. You know, they have things they need to
15 fix. We don't need to have another meeting. We
16 don't need to have all these question. Ask your
17 question at Commission.

18 That hasn't happened to me, I will say
19 that, mainly because I don't believe in the behind
20 closed doors email questions. Like, if I'm going
21 to ask a question, I'm going to do it publicly
22 because the public deserves to know what I'm asking
23 and what the answers are.

24 But yeah, we were basically just -- we
25 can ask some questions but it was all delegated to

1 Mr. Kanellakos. He made all the decisions as far
2 as I know.

3 And in terms of the return to service,
4 the requirements were that OC Transpo and TRA had
5 to be satisfied with the return to service plan,
6 which I never saw. And there was a media briefing
7 prior to the return to service being launched. It
8 was a briefing for all councillors. I don't think
9 citizen commissioners were originally invited, and
10 then I piped up and I said, We're invited too,
11 right? Because we're not always invited to things.

12 And then Transit Commission was
13 cancelled at one point, the December meeting, I
14 believe. The Transit Commission was cancelled, the
15 December meeting, and it was combined -- the update
16 was combined with the Fedco meeting, and it was
17 going to be done in camera, I believe. So there
18 was no way I was ever going to hear that update,
19 and because it's done in camera, my colleagues who
20 are -- my friends who are on council aren't able to
21 tell me about it, and I wouldn't ask them to
22 because that's wrong.

23 So we had very little to do with the
24 return to service. It was all handled by
25 Mr. Kanellakos and we were just told about it, to

1 be honest with you.

2 MS. MCGRANN: Ms. McLellan, do you have
3 any follow-up questions on anything we've discussed
4 so far?

5 MS. MCLELLAN: No.

6 MS. MCGRANN: We're coming close to the
7 end of my questions. And the last few I think will
8 be a bit more opened ended.

9 Let me put it this way, have you been
10 back on stage one of the LRT since the return to
11 service after the second derailment?

12 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I have not been on
13 the LRT since the pandemic was declared by the WHO.

14 MS. MCGRANN: Based on information that
15 you've received as a member of the Transit
16 Commission, what is your view on how the operations
17 have been since the return to service after the
18 second derailment?

19 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: From what I
20 understand, things have improved a little bit, but
21 we do still have a lot of ongoing issues with
22 trains that are just mysteriously stopped.
23 Multiple trains per week causes a single tracking,
24 which causes a delay to customers because,
25 obviously, the trains aren't running as fast if

1 they're having to single track around where the
2 problem station is, where the train's stuck.

3 It's weekly. We still have weekly
4 problems on a brand new system. Two this week so
5 far, as I said, and we're only on Thursday.

6 I will say that I think that there have
7 been some improvements. I think that we're getting
8 there. I think that there's still a very long way
9 to go, and I am very worried about when TRA leaves,
10 to be honest with you.

11 I haven't been shy about stating my
12 opinion that I think RTM -- the contract with RTM
13 needs to be terminated and that the expertise needs
14 to be brought in-house to OC Transpo because then
15 at least there's some direct oversight by OC
16 Transpo.

17 I do know that OC Transpo has also
18 recently started taking a more active role in
19 oversight of RTM prior to the derailments. It's my
20 understanding that OC Transpo's oversight role was
21 really to do with contractual obligations,
22 contractual agreements making sure that RTM is
23 living up to their end of the project agreement,
24 the contract. Sorry, not the project agreement,
25 the maintenance agreement contract. But in terms

1 of oversight of RTM's activities and their
2 operations that the City wasn't really involved in
3 that at all. It's my understanding that they are
4 now more involved in that, and I got an email
5 earlier this week that there's a new chief safety
6 officer that they have actually hired. It's
7 actually quite a get, I have to say, from the
8 Transportation Safety Board. He's like the
9 director of rail investigations or something, so
10 that's quite impressive as our new -- I mean I
11 don't think there could be a better choice at this
12 point.

13 So I think that some of the right moves
14 are being made to put players on the board, put
15 pieces on the board that need to be there for
16 oversight. My question is why did it take this
17 long and two derailments for that to happen? And I
18 don't know that I'll ever get an answer to that
19 question, but yeah.

20 MS. MCGRANN: With respect to the more
21 active role that you say OC Transpo is taking now
22 in addition to the new hire that you just
23 referenced, what else did they do to say that?

24 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: So we recently at
25 the last Transit Commission meeting received a

1 report from -- I'm going to get his title wrong --
2 the regulatory compliance officer, regulatory
3 management --

4 MS. MCGRANN: The RM --

5 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: RM, and I know
6 it's compliance. So I know it's regulatory and
7 there's an M and then -- okay. His name is Sam
8 Baratta and his job is to basically audit and to
9 ensure compliance with the regulations that our
10 train system runs under.

11 And so in his report, he provides the
12 findings of OC Transpo and RTM separately, which I
13 personally appreciate because you can see how the
14 two organizations are doing, and one of his
15 findings was that more oversight -- again, this was
16 a report from a while back, but that more oversight
17 of RTM by OC Transpo was needed with respect to
18 operations and, of course, the addendum to that
19 was, of course OC Transpo had already started with
20 more oversight.

21 And I do believe that Renee Amilcar who
22 is the general manager of OC Transpo in her email
23 about hiring a new chief safety officer, she did
24 also talk about that there is the deputy chief
25 safety officer -- that there's actually going to be

1 an organization for oversight of safety within OC
2 Transpo.

3 I will say though sort of touching back
4 on your question in terms of public trust and the
5 problems with the system as a whole, it did come
6 out in that report of Mr. Baratta, and I asked him
7 about it, that one of the requirements of the
8 project agreement was that RTG, RTM would have an
9 emergency response plan for the maintenance and
10 storage facility, the MSF, in place at time of
11 handover to the City, which Baratta found that even
12 now currently, RTM does not have a complete
13 emergency response plan.

14 So not only was it not complete at the
15 time of handover, it's still not complete which, of
16 course, in my brain, the way it works, makes me
17 think what else in the project agreement wasn't
18 completed at handover?

19 And so I found Mr. Baratta's report to
20 be eye opening on some issues for sure.

21 MS. MCGRANN: Are you aware of any
22 issues that have flowed from the lack of a
23 compliant emergency response plan for the MSF
24 facility?

25 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I do know that we

1 have had issues within the MSF. We have had --
2 there have been derailments in the MSF. Again, the
3 trains are going slow. Like I get that. They're
4 not going at 80 clicks an hour in the MSF. There's
5 not enough room. It's actually very tight in there
6 from my understanding, but there have been
7 derailments.

8 There's actually been trains than have
9 -- again, at low speed but still, they've collided
10 with another one in the MSF, and so I have to
11 wonder, you know, the lack of an emergency response
12 plan in a maintenance and storage facility for very
13 large trains where there are people and it's a very
14 tight space, from my understanding, I haven't been
15 there, I don't enjoy tight spaces, so I'm not going
16 there, but it's my understanding that it's in a
17 very tight space where they have to maneuver these
18 trains around. It concerns me that we've had
19 issues with the MSF and there is no emergency -- I
20 should say there is an incomplete emergency
21 response plan. Apparently they have fire safety or
22 something, but there is incomplete emergency
23 response planning.

24 MS. MCGRANN: Ms. McLennan, any
25 follow-up questions on that?

1 MS. MCLELLAN: No.

2 MS. MCGRANN: Ms. Wright-Gilbert, is
3 there anything that you wanted to discuss that we
4 haven't covered in our meeting today with respect
5 to LRT and the breakdowns, which is the focus of
6 the Commission's investigation?

7 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I will say this:
8 It's sort of just reenforcing a point that I've
9 made a couple of times, but I think it's important.
10 The two derailments and the generic and lack of
11 information that was provided to Commission and to
12 the public by OC Transpo and RTM really
13 demonstrated to me that I don't believe that OC
14 Transpo and RTM are being truthful, totally
15 truthful with the public and with the Commission.

16 Whether it's a public relations move,
17 we don't want to tell people too much, we don't
18 want to worry them, I don't honestly know. I don't
19 know what the reasons behind it are, but I do know
20 that OC Transpo has a documented history of -- with
21 the LRT of playing down the seriousness of events.

22 I don't want to try to imagine their
23 motives. I don't want to speak for them on their
24 motives. Quite honestly I don't care about their
25 motives. What I care about is the fact that I, as

1 a commissioner, I'm disturbed by the lack of
2 information that's provided to me.

3 I find that I do not trust the
4 information that's coming from OC Transpo or RTM.
5 I only trust the information with respect to the
6 derailments specifically from the Transportation
7 Safety Board. I think they've done amazing work,
8 and I'm grateful to them.

9 The information that was revealed in
10 those reports from the TSB is just short of
11 disturbing. And I feel as though this entire
12 project from start, which I wasn't around for, I
13 mean I lived here, but from start to finish to
14 current state is so shrouded in secrecy and double
15 talk and generic information being provided to the
16 very Commission that oversees public transit in the
17 city, it disturbs me, and it saddens me, and it
18 makes me very angry, and I think it's important
19 that I say that on the record because I've done my
20 best to try to bring out the information whether it
21 be through Transit Commission, I'm not very well
22 liked there, it's fine, or through the media using
23 public pressure to try to get things done, I've
24 done my best but I have -- yeah, it's incredibly
25 frustrating, to be honest with you. And my --

1 almost my entire term as a commissioner has just
2 been an exercise in frustration and disappointment,
3 but I hope something good comes out of the inquiry.
4 So I just wanted to say that.

5 MS. MCGRANN: You referenced what I'll
6 describe as a -- it sounds like you felt you got
7 different levels of information from the
8 Transportation Safety Board as compared to what was
9 reported by OC Transpo. Have you asked why that
10 was the case? Have you asked why you're getting
11 different or more detailed information from the
12 Transportation Safety Board than was available
13 through OC Transpo?

14 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I haven't asked
15 that, not directly. I have -- myself and other
16 members of the Transit Commission and councillors
17 who attend Transit Commission and ask questions, we
18 have, you know, asked detailed questions about the
19 derailments and other issues prior to perhaps the
20 Transportation Safety Board reports coming out, and
21 frequently the answer was, Well, it's still under
22 investigation with the Transportation Safety Board.
23 I don't want to say anything until they pronounce
24 on it, which is fair. Like, I will say that's a
25 fair statement, but when it's very clear to me

1 anyway that -- I mean even, for example, the issue
2 with the September derailments, there was a debate
3 about whether or not the train had actually
4 derailed prior to coming into the station or if it
5 left the station in a derailed state, how could
6 that happen? How could it travel so far? Well, we
7 don't know that it was derailed when it came into
8 the station. But they have footage. Those
9 stations all have cameras.

10 And it's my understanding that the very
11 first thing that happens when there's a major
12 incident on the line is that the person who works
13 in the rail operations centre -- rail control
14 operation centre, it's got a lot of screens. I've
15 been in there. The very first things that happens
16 procedurally is the footage from those related to
17 the area of the train, all the footage is put onto
18 a separate drive. It is isolated so it can be
19 viewed immediately.

20 So the fact that there was even a
21 debate in media appearances by Mr. Manconi and by
22 others with the City and even during the Transit
23 Commission meeting that followed, there was a
24 debate about whether or not the trail was derailed
25 before it came into the station. There was camera

1 footage, and I don't understand why information is
2 so hard to get out of them.

3 Let me put it this way, at our last
4 Transit Commission meeting, we were on agenda item
5 number one, line one update, bus update for over
6 four hours of presentation and questions. Four
7 hours. It's exhausting. I'm exhausted after a
8 Transit Commission meeting. It goes all day and
9 it's just an exercise in frustration, to be honest
10 with you, to try to get information.

11 MS. MCGRANN: The Commission has I
12 could describe it as a two-fold mandate. One, to
13 look back in time and answer the questions that are
14 posed in the order council, and two to make
15 recommendations to try to prevent the issues under
16 investigation from happening again.

17 Do you have any thoughts on either
18 specific recommendations or areas that you think
19 the Commissioner should consider for his work in
20 making the recommendations?

21 MS. WRIGHT-GILBERT: I think that the
22 area of transparency of information and
23 decision-making, specifically decision-making needs
24 -- because that's not even clear to me and I'm a
25 Transit commissioner. Decisions get made and quite

1 honestly I have no idea who made -- I think one of
2 the most frequent phrases that comes out of my
3 mouth was whose call was that? Who made that
4 decision? I don't know.

5 I think it's really important that, you
6 know, to know that when -- I try to do my best to
7 prepare for my Transit Commission meetings and to
8 follow up on issues and ask questions by email if I
9 have to, but I think it's important to note that
10 this is a volunteer position for me. I have a
11 full-time job. And, you know, I have a husband and
12 no children, no human children, furry ones, but I
13 do my very best, but this isn't my job but I treat
14 it like one as much as I can.

15 In terms of recommendations, I would
16 say that there needs to be -- that the default
17 needs to be absolute transparency to the public
18 about decisions, about contractual documents that
19 their taxes and their user fees are paying for,
20 because I think in this day and age, public trust
21 is not the default anymore in governments. And
22 it's unfortunate, but it's just the reality, and I
23 think that in order to gain public trust, you don't
24 start with it, you've got to gain it. And in order
25 to gain public trust, transparency is key, and

1 being above board on everything, and, yeah,
2 transparency as a default I think would be my
3 number one recommendation when it comes to going
4 forward and hoping that this doesn't happen again.

5 MS. MCGRANN: That brings the questions
6 that I have for today to a close.

7 Mr. Wardle, do you have any follow-up
8 questions that you wanted to ask?

9 MR. WARDLE: I don't, thank you.

10 MS. MCGRANN: Well, then, I'll say
11 thank you very much for your time today, much
12 appreciated, and we can bring this to a close.

13 -- Concluded at 4:10 p.m.

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, COLLEEN REA, CSR, Certified
Shorthand Reporter, certify;

That the foregoing proceedings were
taken before me at the time and place therein set
forth;

That the statements of the
presenters and all comments made at the time of the
meeting were recorded stenographically by me;

That the foregoing is a Certified
Transcript of my shorthand notes so taken.

Dated this 7th day of April, 2022.

CRea

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PER: COLLEEN REA, CSR

WORD INDEX

< 1 >

1 3:4 7:2
100 31:12
12 20:20 21:6
22:8 31:9, 12,
13 68:12
16th 65:20

< 2 >

2 3:5 38:22, 23
2:00 1:11 4:1
20 46:11
200 51:17
2009 5:15 6:3
2018 7:17, 18
2019 9:8, 16
10:25 11:2, 25
12:3, 11 13:1
15:22, 23 22:18
26:24
2020 15:24
75:10
2021 3:5 38:11,
24
2022 1:6, 11
96:14
20th 79:17
24 3:5 38:11, 24

< 3 >

30 8:23 12:4
33:1 65:14
31st 79:15
33(6) 5:14
33(7) 6:2
37 3:5

< 4 >

4 31:11, 13
4:10 1:11 95:13

< 5 >

5 3:4 6:5 41:3
65:14

< 6 >

6 9:16 26:24
6th 9:8

< 7 >

7 1:6
7th 1:10 96:14

< 8 >

8 31:10, 12
80 88:4

< 9 >

95 71:5

< A >

absolute 94:17
absolutely
26:11 43:16
46:3
absurd 40:15
absurdity 40:15
accept 71:1
72:19
acceptable
35:11
accepting 28:20
access 21:1
37:10 50:22
51:17, 23 69:25
accomplishment
s 55:6
account 35:20
accountability
33:21
acknowledging
42:16, 18
Act 5:15 6:3, 6
64:18
action 30:5
active 35:18
84:18 85:21
actively 17:23
activities 85:1
actual 7:10
ad 15:6
add 16:3
added 44:1
addendum
86:18
addition 33:11
85:22
additional 77:8
address 7:10,
12 42:25
adjustments
19:18
admit 26:10
34:10, 13 36:5
advance 6:16
13:6

advantage 31:14
advice 27:4
advised 6:3
22:16, 17
AFFIRMED 4:2
afoot 69:17
after 5:1 7:18
8:25 12:4 18:1
44:10, 23 45:8,
16 46:19 52:11,
23 57:18 61:23
64:25 74:2
77:12 80:23
83:11, 17 93:7
afternoon 4:3
63:3, 6
age 94:20
agenda 12:23
13:16, 17, 19, 20
14:20, 24 15:2,
3, 6, 15 16:4, 7,
8 44:2, 9 79:17
93:4
ago 9:5 50:3
67:20 79:1
agree 45:20
agreement 9:19
21:8 24:7
25:12, 15, 18
30:10, 13, 17, 21,
25 32:23, 24
33:6, 14 84:23,
24, 25 87:8, 17
agreements
30:18 33:19
84:22
ahead 28:1, 5,
11
Aid 67:17, 19
air 66:11
akin 76:25
Allan 8:20
allowed 11:18
25:12, 17 31:7,
16 34:19 72:5,
22 73:1 74:1,
17 78:16, 24
79:1, 5
Allstone 61:18
Alstom 61:3
amazed 41:23
amazing 54:15,
19 55:9 90:7
Amilcar 86:21

amount 51:5
amounts 32:11
and/or 13:8
anecdotally 41:1
anger 74:13
angry 44:15
90:18
Anne 49:21
50:12, 14, 15
51:9 52:7, 17
53:3
announced
46:20
annoys 27:21
answered 81:12
answering
27:20 29:15
42:5
answers 26:1
27:12 28:22
29:21 70:25
71:1 72:5, 8, 20
73:14 76:9, 24
78:8, 19 81:23
anticipated
12:16
anymore 37:23
52:25 94:21
anyway 92:1
apologies 13:2
apologize 10:9
16:14 17:2, 15
19:22 32:5
42:6 47:21
49:14 54:22
74:21, 23 75:9,
15
apparently
32:20 52:20
58:25 68:12
88:21
appear 75:18
appearances
47:10 78:4
92:21
appeared 74:19
appended 5:13
applicants 8:13
application 8:7
applied 8:6, 8
71:22
applying 71:19
appreciate
58:15 86:13

appreciated
75:6 95:12
approached
16:2
approved 72:7
approximately
8:24
APRIL 1:6, 11
12:11 79:17
96:14
area 92:17
93:22
areas 93:18
arena 10:6
argument 34:5
arriving 60:1
Article 3:5
38:9, 16, 19, 24
50:2 69:23
articles 37:9, 11
artwork 66:10
aside 39:13, 14,
20
asked 5:17
6:15 22:9 23:5,
18, 24 25:13
27:23, 24 30:5
36:24 45:17, 19
64:2, 5 71:3, 18
72:19 76:13
81:10 87:6
91:9, 10, 14, 18
asking 16:3
24:24 28:7, 13
71:16 75:24
77:15 79:8
81:22
aspects 14:22
assessments
68:2, 6
assume 48:20
assumed 63:6
ATI's 21:4
attach 38:21
attached 62:14
attend 10:2
73:23 91:17
attendance
10:10
attended 17:22
21:11 73:21
attending 1:10
9:25 76:21
attention 15:19
44:8

attitude 13:23,
24 14:6
Attorney 30:1, 2
audit 86:8
August 12:21,
24 13:1 22:18
62:24 64:25
authority 14:10
72:12 81:1, 2, 3
availability
11:17 13:3
18:2 24:10
52:12
available 18:7
30:18, 20 33:19
91:12
aware 68:3
87:21
awful 63:8
axle 39:6

< B >

babe 26:11
baby-sit 54:14
back 8:6 9:20
10:15 24:15
29:22 32:2
40:8 44:13
48:25 51:9
53:9, 25 77:2
78:17 80:2, 4
81:1 83:10
86:16 87:3
93:13
bad 59:19
Baratta 86:8
87:6, 11
Baratta's 87:19
barred 79:20
based 37:10, 11
38:3 68:7, 8
80:12 83:14
basically 81:24
86:8
basis 5:6 15:7
bear 36:22
bearings 39:7
becoming 34:11
beginning
21:24 22:1
39:25 42:16
behalf 23:22
24:24 34:4
44:8 46:8 74:9

behaves 43:6
behold 57:5
believe 7:18
8:16 9:7, 9
10:4 11:16
12:10, 12 15:22
16:3 27:23
30:11, 25 44:24
45:18 56:9
67:10 70:1, 5
71:17 78:14
81:19 82:14, 17
86:21 89:13
beloved 52:1
beneficial 77:4
78:6
benefit 34:21
56:22 76:6
benefits 20:8
33:17, 21 57:8,
11 73:21
best 8:16
12:13 19:25
26:8 43:22
49:15 90:20, 24
94:6, 13
better 70:24
75:5 85:11
big 17:25
22:19, 21 23:19
biggest 39:17,
24 40:18 48:15
bit 11:13 12:16
19:1 25:24
29:2, 7, 20
31:21, 22 36:21
46:10 60:17
61:7, 14 63:9
72:18 78:18
83:8, 20
bite 71:4
bites 72:6
Blair 21:25 40:6
blame 64:6
blaming 42:20
52:16
blatantly 26:7
blindly 28:20
blindness 59:10
bluntly 32:8
Board 62:11, 18
65:11 68:21
85:8, 14, 15
90:7 91:8, 12,

20, 22 95:1
bogies 69:9
bolder 29:2
bolts 63:4, 5, 7
boogeyman
74:18
book 67:18
boss 73:11
bosses 55:24
bother 53:8
81:13
bought 65:21
66:5 67:16, 21
bounce 36:20
53:5
box 45:10, 11,
21 63:4
brain 75:8
87:16
brakes 39:3
brand 84:4
break 6:8
breakdown
57:23
breakdowns
39:12 49:1
70:12 89:5
breathed 40:1
briefing 82:6, 8
bring 8:3 54:12
90:20 95:12
brings 81:1
95:5
Brockington
15:12, 17 16:2,
5 49:18
Brockington's
43:25
Brockinton
13:18
broken 61:14
brought 15:18
16:5 45:22
59:21 84:14
budget 12:5, 7
28:8
budgets 31:6
building 55:19
built 66:22, 24,
25 67:11, 12, 14
bunch 60:11
bus 10:22
15:10 16:7, 20
19:2 20:2
21:23 36:2, 7

37:21 41:10, 13,
16 44:1 73:6
93:5
business 34:18
55:10
busses 37:24
button 22:19
buzz 71:11

< C >
calibrated 39:25
call 11:11
14:18 29:15
35:12, 24 44:8
46:1 50:17 94:3
called 8:11, 14
48:1
callout 7:20
camera 82:17,
19 92:25
cameras 92:9
campaign 50:23
Canada 6:5
cancelled 82:13,
14
candidate 51:23
candidates 51:2
caps 56:17
car 67:17, 20
care 55:14
61:21 63:25
64:1, 13 65:12
89:24, 25
career 7:22, 23
Carol 49:21
50:12, 14, 15
51:9 52:7, 17
53:3
carry 59:20
cars 62:21
67:19
case 24:11
32:18 91:10
catch 17:1
catenary 39:3
67:6 69:9
Catherine 28:3
49:18
caucus 49:25
caused 39:17
40:18 67:7
CBC 20:18
cc 73:5, 7
central 50:17

centre 45:13, 15,
22 92:13, 14
CEO 76:18, 20
certain 4:16
28:16 32:11, 12
certainly 14:16
17:20, 22 23:3
50:18 57:21
64:7 69:11
76:7, 9 78:6
CERTIFICATE
96:1
Certified 96:3,
11
certify 96:4
Chair 8:20
11:9 15:20
16:2, 4 25:9, 21
31:10 32:14, 16,
21 44:3, 15
71:24 81:12
chairs 11:7
championed
15:11
chance 38:15
change 33:9
76:17 77:24
changed 41:10,
14 73:19
changing 41:15
78:1
characters
43:15
charge 73:7
cheaply 66:8
Chianello 20:18
21:2 69:24
chief 85:5
86:23, 24
child 41:4
children 94:12
choice 47:9
55:12 85:11
choose 26:5
chosen 8:24, 25
9:9, 10 51:21
64:4
chunk 24:12
circumstances
39:11 46:4
Citizen 7:14
8:13 9:23
21:20 25:10
31:11 38:10

<p>43:12 79:5, 21 82:9 CITY 1:4 7:7, 12, 19 8:5, 17 10:7, 8 17:10 18:8, 19 22:25 23:20 26:25 31:10 35:20 37:1, 13, 14, 18 38:2, 5 43:9, 13 46:20 47:8, 18 49:13 51:16 54:3, 25 56:24 57:9, 12 58:21 64:4, 9 65:17 68:15 69:14 70:1, 5, 9 74:15 76:3 79:3 81:6 85:2 87:11 90:17 92:22 City's 14:23 civil 5:20 clarify 48:12 clear 16:17 31:24 32:16 37:12 48:22 91:25 93:24 clicks 88:4 clip 67:7 close 83:6 95:6, 12 closed 40:3 67:8 81:20 Club 43:14 48:1, 24 49:6, 7, 11, 18 50:1, 4, 17, 21, 22 51:3, 4 52:8, 24 72:3 co-counsel 4:15 cold 50:7, 10 53:2 66:12 67:5, 7 Co-Lead 2:3 4:5 collaborative 4:14 colleague 60:4 colleagues 17:21 23:2 31:8 56:9, 13 71:1 80:17 82:19 Colleen 2:14 96:3, 19 collided 88:9</p>	<p>combined 82:15, 16 come 7:14 9:20 20:17 24:15 28:23 29:22 36:7 37:9 38:4 40:21, 22 43:1 45:8 48:24 49:4 51:24 57:4 78:11 87:5 comedy 63:8 comes 21:1 25:19 30:19, 24 32:1, 2 33:22, 24 34:23 43:23 51:5 61:7 68:18, 19 81:7 91:3 94:2 95:3 comfort 58:7 coming 35:4 46:4 62:6 64:9 74:4 78:9 83:6 90:4 91:20 92:4 commence 4:23 commencing 4:1 comments 96:9 commercial 39:11 COMMISSION 1:3 2:1, 4 4:5, 7, 20 8:9, 20 9:3, 22 10:16, 24 11:19, 23 12:6, 22 13:7, 9, 14, 15 14:3, 12, 13, 17 15:4 16:6, 9, 23 17:4, 8, 21 18:6, 19 19:7 20:6 21:12 22:10 25:7, 9 26:4 27:2, 5 28:13 31:9 32:13, 15, 16, 20 36:25 42:25 43:5, 7, 9, 15, 22 44:10, 25 46:7 47:22, 24 48:25 54:14 56:14 58:6 59:4 70:5, 11, 14, 19, 22 71:15, 25 72:4, 10, 17, 18, 25 73:18, 21,</p>	<p>23 74:20 75:3, 18 78:5, 9, 25 79:15, 17 80:14, 17 81:17 82:12, 14 83:16 85:25 89:11, 15 90:16, 21 91:16, 17 92:23 93:4, 8, 11 94:7 Commissioner 7:15 8:14 9:1, 10, 11, 23 10:17, 19 19:12 21:5, 19, 20 23:16, 21 25:11, 24 26:10, 19 29:5, 22 31:4 33:2 34:11 35:7, 17 36:18 37:7 39:16 42:10, 13 57:10 73:15 79:5, 21 90:1 91:1 93:19, 25 commissioners 25:17 27:23 31:12 34:20 43:12 45:16 46:13 47:11, 25 82:9 commissioner's 78:25 79:7 commissions 12:6 43:8 Commission's 4:13, 21, 25 5:5 39:10 80:23 89:6 Committee 11:5, 6, 7 47:24 committees 11:8 43:8 commonly 11:5 40:7 communicate 61:17 73:1, 18 74:2 77:9 communicating 77:10 communication 45:12, 15, 21 57:8 61:19 73:13 communications 45:9, 11 54:17</p>	<p>community 7:25 commute 41:24 companies 57:1 company 17:16 24:11 33:1 47:15, 16 54:21 55:2, 9 64:3, 23 65:1 77:21 company's 55:5 compared 91:8 compensation 48:7 compiled 51:1 complaining 64:20 complete 33:18 87:12, 14, 15 completed 87:18 completely 28:18 completion 25:3 complex 37:3, 4 43:4 compliance 86:2, 6, 9 compliant 87:23 compound 40:24 compounded 41:5, 20 compounding 40:19 42:23 comprehensive 9:19 25:15 31:5 computers 39:4 concern 24:2 53:19 55:13 59:22 concerned 14:1, 2, 5 concerns 24:3, 23 53:11, 14 68:15 69:14 70:3 78:13 88:18 concluded 64:13 95:13 conclusion 29:12 35:14 conducting 13:10 confidence 73:14 confidential 5:6 34:18</p>	<p>conflate 17:14 80:3 conflict 55:16 56:6 connections 51:14, 16 conscience 77:17 consider 93:19 considered 34:17 constantly 40:20 construction 41:9 consultation 10:3, 7 consultations 9:25 context 62:4 contextually 50:20 continuation 32:9 continuing 34:25 64:16 contract 31:17, 19 34:9 47:18 54:4 65:13, 15, 18 84:12, 24, 25 contracted 33:1 contracting 25:5, 6, 8 contractor 46:21, 24 47:3, 5 53:12, 13, 20 54:3, 6, 13 55:1 60:18, 22, 25 contractual 84:21, 22 94:18 contributed 39:12 contributors 64:14 control 34:1 45:13, 15, 22 92:13 controlling 34:2 conversation 36:4 conversations 52:7 copied 73:10 copy 6:17, 20 copying 73:11</p>
---	---	--	---	--

correct 5:9
10:5 30:14
corrections 5:1,
4, 12
Council 9:11,
12 12:5 13:17
31:8 82:20
93:14
Councillor 8:21
15:12, 17 16:2,
5 25:16 43:25
45:18 71:18
72:2
councillors
31:11 43:10, 11
45:17 46:13
47:11 49:5, 6
51:3, 4 79:22
82:8 91:16
COUNSEL 2:1,
3, 4, 10 4:5, 7,
16 5:5 6:15
30:4 70:5
counsellors
8:18
count 50:19
couple 9:21
27:22 43:11
48:10, 23 52:25
63:2 68:7 76:8
89:9
couplers 39:6
course 37:7
47:14 51:11
52:1 72:2 77:3
86:18, 19 87:16
court 18:17
64:21 96:18
courthouse 30:3
cover 8:7
covered 89:4
cracked 39:5, 6
cracking 66:18
create 27:18
48:3
crossing 38:5
Crown 5:21
30:4
crucial 61:8
CSR 96:3, 19
cure 24:20
current 6:21
90:14
currently 47:18

87:12
curve 66:20
curves 66:20
customer 11:15
customers
11:17 16:19
20:3 40:18
42:20 52:15, 16
83:24
cut 17:1
cuts 44:16
CV 3:4 6:16, 21
7:3 8:8

< D >
dad 67:18
daily 8:10
damn 52:16
date 10:9
12:17 22:17
30:11 70:15
74:3, 21
dated 3:5
38:24 96:14
day 1:10 8:24,
25 9:7 10:11
16:17 20:21, 23
21:21, 23 26:23
36:2, 12 44:6
49:21 93:8
94:20 96:14
daycare 41:2
days 20:20
21:6 22:8 63:1,
14 65:10 68:12
day-to-day
14:14
deal 69:6
dealing 34:11
59:19 60:20
dealt 43:24
debate 79:19
92:2, 21, 24
December
82:13, 15
decent 35:19
decides 47:24
decision 22:16
94:4
decision-making
21:15, 17 93:23
decisions 31:5,
14 34:4 82:1
93:25 94:18

deck 44:20
45:2, 3
decks 14:4
declaration 4:13
declared 83:13
decrease 35:13
decreased 35:15
deemed 5:16
80:20
deep 59:5
default 94:16,
21 95:2
defence 30:4
defending 47:8
deference 26:15
deferent 26:15
deferring 26:15
deficiencies
80:7
definitely 23:5
delay 24:19
46:10 83:24
delayed 11:13
24:13, 14, 15
69:20
delays 18:3
delegated 14:10
72:12 81:1, 2, 3,
5, 25
demonstrated
89:13
depends 49:21
deputy 86:24
derailed 62:22
63:14 64:24
65:10 92:4, 5, 7,
24
derailment
44:23 46:20
49:2 61:23
62:19, 24 63:1
65:1, 4 77:12
80:24 83:11, 18
derailments
39:7, 13, 14, 20
44:22 48:13
54:2 62:12
70:13 84:19
85:17 88:2, 7
89:10 90:6
91:19 92:2
describe 91:6
93:12
descriptions

80:13
deserves 81:22
designed 66:12
destroyed 45:12
detailed 91:11,
18
developer 51:1
developers
50:23, 24 51:5, 6
Development
11:5
died 70:7
different 14:22
29:1 45:16
72:9 91:7, 11
difficulties 57:16
direct 26:6
84:15
direction 10:21
33:3 72:9
directly 61:17
73:2, 19 76:6
77:9, 10 91:15
director 85:9
disappeared
41:13
disappointment
91:2
discuss 89:3
discussed 60:6
83:3
discussion
79:18
disrespectful
29:6
disruption 39:24
disruptions
39:17
disturbed 90:1
disturbing 90:11
disturbs 90:17
DM 35:20
document 6:15,
17, 18 31:13
documentation
59:6
documented
89:20
documents
18:18, 20 31:7
34:5, 17, 19
79:22 94:18
dog 78:8
doing 10:24
24:3 27:2 28:6

37:21 46:16
57:7, 16 58:21,
22 74:17 77:24
78:1 86:14
donation 51:1
donations
50:23 51:10
door 42:20
51:17, 18, 25
52:17
doors 39:3, 25
42:20 52:16
81:20
double 90:14
double-checking
65:7
downtown
41:12 42:2
draft 56:2
draw 35:14
drive 92:18
Dudas 8:21
due 53:20
dug 59:4
dysfunctional
43:22 47:23

< E >
earlier 25:24
57:25 70:10
75:7 85:5
early 15:24
27:24
easier 49:5
easiest 56:23
east 40:6
easy 41:24
eavesdropping
36:5
Economic 11:5
educated 68:19
effective 73:13
egregious 63:11
elaboration
19:4, 7, 9
elected 48:4
51:15
election 7:17, 18
electricians
60:21
Elizabeth 2:15
email 7:7, 10,
12 16:3 23:20
47:1, 2 52:20
54:24 56:17

<p>73:5, 7 81:10, 20 85:4 86:22 94:8 emailed 79:2 emails 21:3 23:23 35:20 53:16 70:1 embarrassing 34:14 emergency 87:9, 13, 23 88:11, 19, 20, 22 emoticon 67:22 emphasizing 46:24 employees 51:6 emulated 30:6 ended 83:8 energies 7:21 engagements 54:17 engineer 69:8 enjoy 88:15 enjoys 32:21 ensure 86:9 enter 4:20 6:24 entered 5:1, 6, 11 entire 21:13 90:11 91:1 entirely 59:22, 23 72:21 entity 61:1 74:9 76:2 environment 67:15 equally 71:10 erode 34:24 eroded 35:2 36:16 erosion 63:23 errors 5:10 56:4 escalated 18:4 especially 46:9 59:19 66:23 Esq 2:9 essentially 12:19 16:1 17:15 44:15, 16 48:7 52:22 66:19 71:24 establish 5:19 evaluator 54:5,</p>	<p>12 event 10:4, 6 events 51:24 89:21 eventually 27:22 everybody 65:1 everything's 37:25 evidence 4:12, 21 5:2, 7, 11, 23 6:1, 5 exact 22:17 exactly 37:21 examination 6:25 example 9:25 14:23 44:21, 23 46:19 59:14 64:12 68:21 71:16 92:1 exercise 91:2 93:9 exhausted 93:7 exhausting 42:9 93:7 Exhibit 6:24 7:2 38:22, 23 EXHIBITS 3:1 expect 28:9 expecting 76:10 expensive 65:17 experience 11:23 19:6 34:8, 14 35:17 39:15 57:1 68:8, 9 80:12 experienced 67:25 experiences 36:8 expert 56:25 expertise 47:17 59:12, 13, 21 61:1, 5 84:13 explain 60:13, 14, 16, 17, 24 68:24, 25 exposure 37:6 express 41:10, 12 expressed 78:13, 15 extended 24:18 extension 33:4</p>	<p>eye 87:20 eyes 21:25 56:5 < F > face 37:17 58:14 76:2 Facebook 7:19 35:22 faced 57:17 faces 58:9, 10 facility 87:10, 24 88:12 facing 40:13 fact 53:20 64:16 74:8 89:25 92:20 fair 14:9 27:9 74:8, 12 91:24, 25 faith 42:14 fall 11:18 familiar 59:9 familiarity 59:10 family 51:7 fan 23:19 fancy 66:6 fast 83:25 fault 52:17 favour 52:19 favoured 52:8 feasible 14:15 February 9:8, 16 10:25 11:1 12:3 26:24 feces 39:5 Fedco 11:6, 9, 19, 21 18:22 19:3 25:6, 9, 21 65:16 72:1, 2, 3 82:16 Federal 7:10 26:12 feel 8:1 16:23 17:3 23:21 37:1 42:19 61:24 79:12, 19 90:11 fees 94:19 fell 11:19 52:10 felt 18:6 21:8 32:10 62:5 91:6 fences 42:3 filings 18:17 64:21</p>	<p>finally 45:17 Finance 11:4 financial 24:21 find 19:14 47:5 63:14 90:3 findings 86:12, 15 fine 32:21 36:23 37:25 41:23 49:16 53:7 69:21 73:8 90:22 fingers 38:5 fingertips 28:10 finish 56:2 90:13 fire 88:21 firm 59:8 fiscal 57:20 five-minute 44:11, 14 fix 42:15 81:15 fixed 67:1 flack 74:13 Flash 54:23 flat 39:5 40:7 Fleury 49:20 flow 33:18 flowed 73:22 87:22 fluffy 71:7, 10, 13 72:20 focus 48:21 89:5 focussing 7:21 follow 94:8 followed 27:11 92:23 followers 35:19 follow-up 4:17 48:11 60:5 69:2 83:3 88:25 95:7 follow-ups 19:10 footage 92:8, 16, 17 93:1 forced 13:18 15:11 forceful 29:7, 20 35:8 forcing 35:9 foregoing 96:5, 11 foremost 16:15 forest 55:17</p>	<p>forget 33:6 72:13 forgot 76:18 forma 12:8 formal 13:14, 16, 19 14:20 forte 69:4 forth 80:2, 4, 5 96:7 fortunate 29:25 forward 48:17, 19 95:4 found 59:7 87:11, 19 foundation 53:25 frame 15:21 free 48:6 freezing 40:5 Frequency 41:14 frequent 94:2 frequently 91:21 Friday 10:13 friendly 15:17 27:22 friends 30:4 82:20 front 30:11 froze 40:7 frozen 39:4 frustrated 41:16 frustrating 90:25 frustration 40:25 41:5, 21 78:15 91:2 93:9 full 19:17, 19 20:22 35:6 78:3 full-time 94:11 fully 34:16 37:5 fulsome 70:24 funny 40:14 furry 94:12 fuzzy 31:22, 24 32:5 < G > gain 94:23, 24, 25 game 61:7, 14 65:2, 6 gaps 80:9, 10, 11 general 12:17 14:11 30:1, 2</p>
---	--	--	--	---

33:23 60:18, 22,
25 76:12 80:13
86:22
generally 10:7
16:11 75:12
generic 14:18
46:1 76:12
89:10 90:15
gigger 63:4
gist 71:24
give 8:6 15:21
28:11, 17 38:15
73:13 80:8
given 5:8, 22
15:21 64:11
gives 33:3 58:7
giving 6:1
glaring 56:4
glean 59:1
glitches 39:4
goalpost 68:13
Good 4:3 8:1,
5 14:25 34:6,
23 46:25 54:16
64:6 74:1 76:3,
4 77:17 91:3
Google 47:5
55:3 56:19
Government
7:11 26:13, 14
33:22 34:24
governments
33:23 94:21
grain 18:16
64:22
grateful 90:8
great 29:16
41:17 54:15
59:11 66:11
greater 70:23
greatly 36:16
gritty 28:8
ground 5:18
75:13
guarantee 41:2
77:20
guess 80:11
guides 67:17
guy 74:25
guys 60:22
63:3, 7

< H >
handed 11:2

handle 72:13
handled 82:24
handling 14:5
handover 11:12,
24 12:24 13:1,
6 16:24 17:4
20:6, 9 22:17
24:8 25:2 37:1,
2 87:11, 15, 18
hands 34:3
happen 11:13
22:18 65:3, 5
85:17 92:6 95:4
happened 7:19
9:6 44:24
45:23 63:2
81:18
happening
15:23 16:1
52:12 93:16
happens 92:11,
15
happy 64:24
75:11
hard 21:10
23:5 35:7 48:2
75:15 93:2
harder 72:18, 19
heads 28:11, 18
hear 82:18
heard 63:11
69:10
hearing 77:11,
12
hearings 4:14,
21, 22, 23
heart 21:16
heck 37:16
72:24
Held 1:9
help 49:7
51:14, 15 53:21
57:4 64:25
hey 10:3
highlight 39:1
highly 27:14
28:22 80:18
Hire 55:10
60:22 85:22
hired 47:1, 6, 17
54:21 85:6
hires 60:23
hiring 46:20
54:3 86:23

history 89:20
hoc 15:6
holes 59:7
home 8:4 36:3
42:11 60:19
honest 9:14
18:4 23:7 26:7
30:7 31:2 32:6,
7, 8 34:13
39:22 59:17
64:10 68:10
69:4, 12 74:12
75:2 81:3 83:1
84:10 90:25
93:9
honestly 21:11
22:8 24:23
26:5 29:3 40:8
44:7 77:5
89:18, 24 94:1
hope 41:17
91:3
hopes 77:6
hoping 95:4
Hopping 53:9
horrified 28:4
hour 88:4
hours 20:24
93:6, 7
house 75:16
Hubley 8:20
15:20
huge 24:12
human 76:2
94:12
Humane 8:3
humans 59:20
hundred 8:12
44:2
hundreds 42:1
Hurdman 66:23
husband 8:2
94:11

< I >
idea 26:20
47:16 56:5
67:2 80:8 94:1
identified 57:7
62:23
identify 59:15
ignorance 34:14
ignore 24:4
imagine 41:20
57:2 89:22

immediately
18:2 92:19
important 41:8
46:5 50:20
89:9 90:18
94:5, 9
impossible
80:21
impressed 62:16
impressive
85:10
improperly
66:16
improved 83:20
improvements
57:22 58:3 84:7
inadequate 66:8
incident 92:12
including 31:10
48:2 81:4
incomplete
88:20, 22
Increasingly
76:24 78:7
incredibly 7:23
35:7 90:24
incriminate 5:19
independent
46:23, 25 47:2,
3, 6, 7, 19 53:12,
20 54:3, 4, 5, 7,
12, 25 56:15, 17
INDEX 3:1
individual 76:22
inexcusable
63:20, 22
information 4:9
7:8 13:6 14:16
17:9, 11 18:7
19:11 20:5, 8,
10, 16 21:1, 2
23:13, 15 25:18,
20 28:9, 25
29:16 30:15, 20
31:15, 21 32:12,
17, 19 33:13
34:18 35:4, 5, 6
37:8, 10 38:3
44:19 45:14, 25
46:2 51:1, 2
58:24 61:8, 13,
15, 25 62:2, 6,
10 64:8 69:25
70:8 71:8 76:7,
11, 12 77:1, 8

78:6 83:14
89:11 90:2, 4, 5,
9, 15, 20 91:7,
11 93:1, 10, 22
informed 60:10
informs 67:25
68:17
infrastructure
45:9 67:13
in-house 84:14
initially 53:14
77:4
initiate 33:9
initiative 15:14
in-person 75:21
Inquiries 5:15
6:3
inquiry 5:16, 22
72:24 78:24, 25
79:7, 9 91:3
inside 66:8
inspections
31:20
instance 5:21
instruction
26:22 27:7
instructions
26:20
insulting 56:18
intelligent 68:19
intends 4:20
interest 55:16
56:7
Interesting 27:9
interim 62:19
intervene 4:15
interview 4:10,
11, 14, 18, 19
6:7, 16 7:8
8:11, 15, 22, 23
52:13
introduce 75:19,
22
investigating
62:11
investigation
89:6 91:22
93:16
investigations
85:9
investigative
20:17
invite 48:20
invited 82:9, 10,

<p>11 involve 19:16 involved 7:23 14:14 55:19 85:2, 4 involvement 9:24 10:10 ire 74:13 ironclad 65:13 isolated 92:18 issue 40:17, 21, 22 42:4, 7, 8, 9 47:17 53:22 56:10, 11 76:15 92:1 issues 16:11, 12 20:24 28:17 39:2, 17 40:12, 18, 20, 23 42:25 43:23, 24 44:8, 18 52:11 55:18 62:23, 25 66:17 67:4, 6, 23 69:5 70:12 83:21 87:20, 22 88:1, 19 91:19 93:15 94:8 item 13:16, 19 14:21 15:2 16:4, 8 44:1, 9 79:17 93:4 items 14:24 15:3, 6, 9, 15</p> <p>< J > Jeff 49:19 Jim 50:16 52:13, 18 Joanne 20:18 21:2 69:24 job 74:18 86:8 94:11, 13 jobs 13:25 John 12:18 14:11 27:25 70:2 join 9:3 59:3 joined 4:6 10:25 joining 9:21 judgement 56:7 July 12:21 jumping 42:3 June 12:11, 23</p>	<p>< K > Kanellakos 54:24 81:6 82:1, 25 Kate 2:3 4:4 keeping 72:25 kept 45:4, 24 46:24 key 94:25 kind 9:14 10:4 13:6, 9 27:11 King 49:20 knew 7:7 22:25 29:13 37:16 38:6 63:24 knock 51:18, 25 knockers 51:17 knowing 17:7 18:9 42:11 58:7 68:11, 14 69:13 known 21:5 22:8, 22, 25 23:7, 10 24:22, 23 knows 65:18 69:18</p> <p>< L > lack 87:22 88:11 89:10 90:1 laid 66:14, 16 land 50:24 large 25:1 32:13, 15 50:23 51:5 88:13 larger 69:17 lasted 8:23 late 15:23 Lauch 74:24 75:1, 17 76:18 laugh 40:16 laughing 40:14 launch 12:15, 16 17:16, 18 18:10, 13, 23 19:1, 5, 14, 16, 24 22:21 23:12 24:1, 4, 18 68:16 launched 32:11 37:8 69:19, 21 82:7</p>	<p>launches 41:19, 25 launching 10:4 21:17 24:17 41:9 70:3 Laura 8:21 Laurent 66:23 lawyer 63:21 lead 29:12 leadership 22:24 37:15 59:15 71:12 76:17 leads 35:14 Leaper 45:18 learn 19:9 29:24 69:5, 9 learned 25:25 44:17 71:20, 21 leave 39:13, 14 52:16 leaves 59:24 84:9 leaving 39:20 led 39:12 46:4 left 45:12 92:5 Leiper 49:19 lemon 65:21 66:1 67:16, 17, 19, 21, 22 68:2 lessons 71:19, 21 letter 8:8 level 19:14 58:7 59:12 levels 91:7 liability 5:20 lie 58:18 60:10 64:6 life 38:20 43:1 55:22 69:10 LIGHT 1:3 57:1 69:6 lightly 61:22 liked 50:16 79:24 80:5 90:22 limit 19:24, 25 limited 25:19 lines 52:25 65:20 73:6 listen 35:25 36:3, 9 listening 71:2</p>	<p>literally 36:12 56:16 litigation 18:18 78:10 live 46:10 lived 90:13 lives 34:3 67:15 living 27:17, 19 84:23 Liz 2:4 4:6 LLP 2:10 local 10:6 locate 30:17 locked 35:22 long 9:5 14:4 52:6 55:25 58:12 67:20 72:16 74:4 75:16 84:8 85:17 longer 55:15, 25 62:5 76:18 long-winded 47:20 48:9 looked 28:3 50:3 59:5 80:6 looking 30:16 31:23 32:1 33:14 55:24 58:2 63:15 looks 38:10 65:19 lose 55:17 losing 41:1 42:13 45:15 lost 45:21 52:18 lot 7:8 9:6 14:16 23:5, 9, 18, 24 24:24 28:22, 24 29:21 30:3 31:18, 21 32:17 35:16 37:8, 16 41:10 45:9 46:7 51:14, 18 59:7 66:13, 17, 20, 22 67:4 69:11 71:1 73:14 80:2 81:2 83:21 92:14 love 29:10 Lovely 62:3 low 57:4 88:9 loyal 43:12</p>	<p>LRT 9:24 10:7, 11, 22, 25 11:2, 3, 16 13:8, 11 14:20 16:7, 13, 17 17:5 35:1 41:4, 9, 17, 19, 23, 25 52:11 66:21 83:10, 13 89:5, 21 LRV's 62:21 lying 60:9</p> <p>< M > made 5:1, 4 7:9 11:6 23:14 34:4 82:1 85:14 89:9 93:25 94:1, 3 96:9 magic 58:16 magically 68:13 69:20 maintain 61:2 maintaining 77:21 maintenance 30:13, 21 31:17, 18 32:23, 24 33:1, 5, 14, 19 64:23 84:25 87:9 88:12 major 61:10 64:14 92:11 majority 43:11 makeup 43:7 47:23 making 31:3, 14 32:7, 8 33:10 34:4 56:19 65:7 84:22 93:20 management 13:24 17:10 22:23, 24 36:16 37:15 56:10 59:1, 16, 18 68:16 69:14 76:13 81:5 86:3 manager 12:18 14:10, 11 54:25 81:6 86:22 Manconi 12:18 14:11 27:25 70:2, 4 71:19</p>
--	---	---	--	---

73:4, 5, 10 74:5,
7, 9 92:21
mandate 10:17
39:10 93:12
maneuver 88:17
mantra 74:16
March 12:11
65:20 79:15
Mario 76:19
marketing 59:23
massive 24:7
25:2
Mathieu 49:20
matter 21:16
25:9, 22 52:5
72:1, 11 79:10
matters 14:8
69:6
mayor 10:9
11:8 17:11
22:20 43:13, 18
47:13, 23 51:11,
12, 13, 21 52:2,
14, 19, 21 80:19
mayor's 8:22
McGrann 2:3
4:3, 4 6:13, 20,
23 7:4, 13 9:2,
17, 20 10:15, 23
11:22 13:5
14:19 15:13
16:10, 22 17:3
18:5 19:13
20:4 22:13
23:11 25:1, 23
30:8, 15 31:25
33:11, 17 35:12
36:20, 24 38:8,
13, 21, 25 39:21
42:24 48:10, 19
49:4, 10, 15
50:2, 9, 13 53:4,
9, 18 57:6
58:20 60:2, 8
64:11 65:19, 25
67:23 69:13
70:10 73:16
75:11 78:12
80:22 83:2, 6,
14 85:20 86:4
87:21 88:24
89:2 91:5
93:11 95:5, 10
McKenney 28:3
49:18

McLellan 2:4
4:6 60:4, 7
83:2, 5 89:1
McLennan 88:24
means 50:21,
22 69:8
measure 18:24
measures 17:17
mechanism
13:14
media 18:15
22:11 23:22
35:18 36:10
46:15 47:9, 10
48:3 50:6 52:4
53:11 64:19
78:15 80:13
82:6 90:22
92:21
Meehan 49:21
50:12, 14, 15
51:9 52:7
meet 12:7
MEETING 1:3
12:2, 3, 8, 9, 22
13:4, 17 17:23
18:22 28:13
44:25 58:5
73:21 74:20
75:18, 23 79:15,
18 81:15 82:13,
15, 16 85:25
89:4 92:23
93:4, 8 96:10
meetings 12:12
13:15, 16 14:3
17:24 21:12
46:9 58:6 59:4
73:24 74:4, 6
75:3, 13, 21
76:21 77:5
78:10 81:9 94:7
Member 2:3, 4
4:6 33:6 44:10
50:17, 21, 22
52:9 72:3 83:15
members 43:18
47:25 51:7
72:10, 16, 17
91:16
membership
70:20
memo 70:4
memory 49:13,
16

Menard 49:19
71:17, 18 72:2
mention 18:21
mentioned
14:19 18:5
25:1, 23 30:8
60:9 69:13
73:16 78:12
message 35:21
52:21
messaging
27:17
messaging 75:8
met 12:10
Micro 59:18
micromanageme
nt 59:17
millimetre 67:8
million 65:14
mind 37:12
72:25
minimal 31:1
Ministry 30:1, 2
minor 61:10
mint 62:15
minute 70:17
minutes 8:23
12:4 44:16, 18
47:4 50:3 73:20
missing 49:22
mistaken 15:24
74:23
mitigate 24:3, 17
mitigation
17:17 18:24
mom 35:24
Monday 10:13
45:1, 2
money 22:7
24:8 50:22, 23
51:5, 15
month 13:20
41:25 65:14
months 79:1
motion 16:6
43:19, 20, 25
72:23
motions 31:6
motives 24:20
89:23, 24, 25
mouth 28:23
94:3
move 54:16, 18,
19 67:7 89:16

moved 68:13
moves 85:13
MSF 87:10, 23
88:1, 2, 4, 10, 19
Multiple 83:23
municipal 7:17
51:19
mysteriously
83:22
mystery 69:17

< N >
naive 26:10, 11
naively 36:17
natural 58:25
natured 76:4
NDA 31:5
near 40:6
nearly 8:12
necessarily
14:14 28:10
35:6 36:4 38:7
58:16 59:18
60:20 61:1
needed 15:7
59:15, 17 62:4
86:17
needs 63:17
84:13 93:23
94:16, 17
NEESON 96:18
neighbourhood
51:25
nervous 29:10
network 51:11
networks 51:17
new 18:1 40:23
55:10 57:20
63:16 76:19, 20
84:4 85:5, 10,
22 86:23
news 62:7
nice 62:13
78:11
nightmare 63:9
nights 7:24
nitty 28:8
noisy 66:24
non-disclosure
9:19 25:15
non-
typographical
5:12
note 7:6 25:5

94:9
notes 96:12
notice 18:21
noticed 27:12
notified 8:25
nugget 77:7
number 16:8
35:19 44:9
55:13 93:5 95:3
NUMBER/DESCR
IPTION 3:3
numerous 77:22

< O >
object 6:4
objected 5:16
obligations
84:21
obtain 4:12
33:15
obvious 48:18
OC 10:21 11:3
12:17 13:24
14:8, 10 17:10
21:10 22:23
33:4 35:3, 13
36:15 37:19
46:14 58:21, 25
61:11, 13, 16
62:6 72:13
76:12 80:1, 3
81:4, 5 82:4
84:14, 15, 17, 20
85:21 86:12, 17,
19, 22 87:1
89:12, 13, 20
90:4 91:9, 13
occasionally
15:18
occasions
25:13 76:9
O'Connor 26:25
October 7:17
57:19
odd 40:9
offer 20:2
office 8:22 9:8,
15 12:2 25:14
26:24 27:3
31:4 51:19
officer 85:6
86:2, 23, 25
offices 42:3
official 23:20

officials 22:12,
20 42:14 48:5
70:9, 25
old 67:18 78:8
older 60:17
ones 61:9
94:12
one's 40:7
ongoing 32:10
41:6 78:10
83:21
online 62:20
Ontario 30:2
51:13
open 40:2
57:15 66:11
75:2 76:16
opened 83:8
opening 24:14,
21 87:20
operating 14:22
operation 14:9
43:1 92:14
operational
14:8 16:18
operations 13:8,
10, 23 14:1, 5, 6,
15, 20 16:12
81:4 83:16
85:2 86:18
92:13
opinion 13:23
14:7 21:18
34:8 36:11
37:13 38:1
55:10 58:19
61:21 63:12, 21
66:3, 4 68:7, 17
84:12
opportunity 5:8
8:5 75:19, 22
optional 8:8
options 20:2
order 4:23
19:9, 11 29:1
54:8 63:15, 16,
18 65:9 93:14
94:23, 24
organization
87:1
organizational
59:12
organizations
50:25 86:14

organized 64:3
original 80:6, 7
originally 82:9
OT 62:1
OTTAWA 1:3, 4
7:7, 12, 17, 20
15:9 24:25
30:3 37:14
38:10 41:6
42:18 43:8, 9
50:24 64:4, 9
66:12 77:23
outcry 48:3
outset 14:21
outside 9:22
59:8 66:7, 9, 11
overhead 67:6
69:9
overheads 39:3
oversee 46:21
54:13 55:16, 18
56:7
oversees 90:16
oversight 10:20
13:9, 22 33:3
58:8, 15 64:20
84:15, 19, 20
85:1, 16 86:15,
16, 20 87:1
owners 39:13

< P >
p.m 1:11 4:1
41:3 95:13
P3 34:10, 11, 12,
15
package 18:18,
20, 21
PAGE/LINE 3:3
pain 48:7
pan 54:23
pandemic 10:14
16:16 21:21
75:8, 15, 20
83:13
Para 10:22
15:10
paragraph 39:2
parallel 16:20
19:1 20:2
24:18 37:23
paraphrasing
26:1 62:20
71:23

pardon 54:20
parents 60:17
Parliament
28:14, 17
parsed 35:5
part 18:17
64:21
PARTICIPANT
2:6
participants
1:10 5:5, 11
participating
17:23
partners 61:3
71:12 74:11
partnership
34:10 66:6
parts 15:8
party 53:11
54:25
pass 16:9
41:13 68:12
72:21, 23
passed 44:5
61:15
passengers
21:14 65:11
Pasture 21:25
Pat 73:6
pause 60:4
pay 41:13
payers 24:25
paying 22:3
94:19
payment 24:8, 9,
12 25:2, 3
payments 25:19
pays 33:7
PDF 38:9
penalties 24:21
people 22:3
26:6 31:9
33:24, 25 35:19,
21, 25 36:3, 6, 9,
12, 13 40:25
41:1, 15 42:1, 3,
18 49:25 51:18,
19 55:1 60:13
62:8 77:15, 23
88:13 89:17
people's 21:22
22:2 40:24
percent 31:12
44:3 71:5

performative
9:14
perfunctory
11:11
pergury 6:1
period 16:21
17:13 18:8
20:11, 13, 15, 16
44:11 73:17
permits 4:16
person 5:21
16:15 61:15, 16
64:7 76:19
92:12
personal 76:1
personally
67:24 86:13
person's 28:23
55:2 62:14
perspective
14:7 21:4 24:6
pertain 30:24
48:13
Peter 2:9 74:24
75:1
phase 11:20
41:9 71:20, 25
phone 58:2
phrase 19:10
25:25
phrased 37:4
phrases 94:2
pick 41:3
piece 27:3, 4
pieces 85:15
Pilbrow 2:15
piped 82:10
place 5:25
12:4, 25 13:2
87:10 96:6
plan 28:13
77:19 78:21, 24
79:2, 4, 11, 13,
20, 25 80:1, 6, 7,
16, 20 82:5
87:9, 13, 23
88:12, 21
planning 88:23
plans 37:20
78:17
players 85:14
playing 89:21
plumbers 60:21
poem 40:9

point 12:15
29:4, 12 31:2, 3
32:7, 9 33:2, 8,
10, 12 39:23
42:7, 22 50:4
52:14 54:1
56:19 71:18
74:15, 19 82:13
85:12 89:8
pointed 45:19
74:7
points 27:14, 15,
17 72:7 76:25
political 27:14
28:22 51:14
71:7
politics 51:13
pony 78:8
poorly 66:12
posed 93:14
position 52:10
59:25 76:19
80:21 94:10
positions 8:13,
14 37:15
possesses
59:13
possible 72:21
possibly 12:11
22:11 40:11
post 7:19
posted 4:24
PowerPoint
14:4 19:8 44:20
PR 54:16 57:7
precise 10:12
preferred 46:16
prepare 11:24
94:7
prepared 16:24
17:4, 8 36:25
37:2 38:2
PRESENT 2:12
presentation
29:1 44:11
45:3, 4 71:9
93:6
presentations
27:19 59:2
presented 44:19
presenters 96:9
pressure 22:11,
13 46:15 47:12,
13 48:4 90:23

pretty 17:25
26:7 52:1 75:2
prevent 93:15
previous 19:21
71:9
previously
62:22 72:6 79:2
printout 38:9
prior 32:19
34:10 41:8
51:13 59:25
63:1 74:2
75:20 82:7
84:19 91:19
92:4
private 23:20
34:9 66:6
privately 23:19
privilege 32:20
pro 12:8
proactively
61:12
problem 42:15,
17, 23 56:12
61:6, 10, 19, 20
74:17 84:2
problematic
48:15
problems 15:23,
25 16:18, 19
18:3 42:21
54:10 56:1
58:17, 18 60:9,
10 64:16, 17
69:19, 20 80:14
84:4 87:5
procedural 4:22
26:19
procedurally
92:16
proceedings
5:20, 24 96:5
process 8:7, 10
processes 59:6
professional
7:10
progressive
46:12 49:25
project 21:7
24:7 25:12, 18
30:10, 16, 24
32:23 53:21
84:23, 24 87:8,
17 90:12

promise 52:3
promote 10:19
promoted 23:3
pronounce
91:23
properly 40:1
41:5 67:14
property 34:17
proposal 23:12,
13
propose 24:1
proposed 17:16,
17 18:10, 23
proposing
18:23 24:2
prosecution 6:1
provide 10:20
28:25 48:6
provided 12:19
14:17 18:19
27:6 28:21, 25
59:11 62:1
64:12 71:5
73:14 76:9
81:8 89:11
90:2, 15
provides 5:15
76:14 86:11
providing 58:8
Provincial 26:13
public 4:13, 21,
25 5:14 6:3
7:9 8:10 9:25
10:19, 21 19:16,
17, 19 21:21
22:12, 21 23:22
26:16 29:10
33:7, 25 34:5, 9,
21, 22, 23 35:1,
13, 15 36:1, 11
41:6, 21 42:14
46:8 47:12
48:3 51:2 54:9
56:21 62:12
63:23 66:6
77:11, 13 81:22
87:4 89:12, 15,
16 90:16, 23
94:17, 20, 23, 25
publically 62:7
publicly 23:19
30:18 33:19
58:4, 9, 13 81:21
published 38:11

pull 49:13
pulled 20:24
pun 54:20
purpose 4:11
15:14
Pursuant 5:14
pursue 26:1
purview 11:18,
20
push 70:23, 24
pushed 22:20
put 22:11, 13
46:15, 22 48:4
78:24 79:7
83:9 85:14
92:17 93:3
putting 24:5
34:2

< Q >
quality 26:8
question 5:17
7:13 15:1
19:21 23:20
27:5, 13 28:7,
24 29:8, 15, 17
37:4, 5 42:6
43:4 45:17
48:14, 22 64:6
71:4, 6, 18, 23,
25 72:1, 19
74:1 76:13
81:11, 16, 17, 21
85:16, 19 87:4
questioning
28:19 29:25
48:2
questions 4:8,
16, 17 6:5, 9
9:21 19:10
21:10, 12 22:6,
10 23:5, 6, 11,
18, 25 24:24
25:7, 20, 25
26:2 27:21, 25
28:5, 14 29:6, 8,
9, 11, 20 30:6
31:18 35:8
36:21 44:12
45:19 46:7
47:10 48:11, 23
59:2 60:3, 5
66:13, 15 69:1,
2 72:5 75:24
76:5, 10 77:6

78:20 80:9
81:9, 10, 20, 25
83:3, 7 88:25
91:17, 18 93:6,
13 94:8 95:5, 8
quickly 19:10
28:21 44:17
52:10, 18 69:5
quite 11:13
12:16 21:10
22:8 26:5, 6
29:3 30:6 35:8
39:22 40:8
41:15 44:7
51:7 68:22
74:4 76:16
77:5 85:7, 10
89:24 93:25

< R >
R1's 37:24
RAIL 1:3 12:20
54:21 56:25
57:1 65:4 69:6
85:9 92:13
raining 67:5
raise 53:11
raised 15:20
53:14 79:16
ramp 19:18
rarely 40:22
Rawlson 49:20
RCG 18:10
Rea 2:14 96:3,
19
read 20:19
62:17 63:24
67:19 69:2
readiness 21:13
23:6
reading 69:12
ready 12:20
21:18 37:18, 19,
20 38:7
reality 94:22
realized 27:20
28:22
really 8:5
10:20 11:10, 11
19:21 26:6
27:13 28:24
34:6 37:6
40:11 41:15
42:5, 15 45:18
48:2, 8 52:2

55:11 59:4
61:24 62:16
63:8 69:18
71:14 72:11
73:25 75:16, 25
76:3, 4 84:21
85:2 89:12 94:5
reason 42:6
45:2, 10
reasoning
21:14 79:13
reasons 24:14
79:8 89:19
rebuild 54:9
56:20
Rebuilding 54:1
recall 10:8
12:24 13:13
15:3 22:16
26:22 28:2
33:16 38:18
74:21 75:23
receivable 5:23
receive 13:5
24:12 79:8
received 6:17
12:14 69:25
83:15 85:25
receiving 11:11
13:8
recognize 6:18
27:15 36:6
55:3 71:13
recollection
8:17 12:13
75:12
recommendation
95:3
recommendation
s 93:15, 18, 20
94:15
record 90:19
recorded 96:10
redacted 30:22
redaction 31:1
reenforcing 89:8
refer 12:7
40:25 49:24
54:14
reference 50:11,
13 53:2
referenced 62:2
79:11 85:23
91:5

<p>referred 11:5 16:10 43:13 54:5 referring 16:18 25:3 45:5 65:22, 25 67:17 69:15, 16, 22 70:8 refused 16:5 44:3 regular 12:8 16:15 regulations 86:9 regulatory 86:2, 6 relate 55:21 related 10:22 15:9 33:13 92:16 relations 89:16 relaunch 46:21 release 62:12 rely 41:4 remember 8:19 9:15 27:24 38:12, 16 41:8 50:7 53:13 54:22 74:3, 25 76:8 remotely 1:10 Renee 86:21 renovating 60:19 repeat 29:17 repeating 74:16 repeats 71:7 replacement 37:24 report 61:11, 12 62:19, 20 63:13 86:1, 11, 16 87:6, 19 reported 18:15 91:9 Reporter 96:4 REPORTER'S 96:1 reporting 21:3 96:18 reports 20:17 62:13, 18 64:19 68:3, 6, 18, 20, 21 69:3 90:10 91:20</p>	<p>representative 8:21 21:22 22:2 36:11 representatives 59:3 73:20, 23 request 24:4 69:25 requests 21:2 37:10 required 6:2 31:19, 20 61:2 requirement 21:7 requirements 82:4 87:7 research 69:11 resolved 58:1 resort 48:1 respect 6:7 10:24 19:13 20:4 25:8 48:14 50:4 57:6 62:18 66:14 85:20 86:17 89:4 90:5 respected 75:6 respond 73:10 response 49:1 57:2 70:12 73:8 79:13, 16 87:9, 13, 23 88:11, 21, 23 responsibilities 7:25 responsibility 11:4 21:9 22:6 rest 32:19 result 21:3 37:9 62:23 66:5 69:7, 24 78:10 results 20:13 retained 53:12, 14 retainer 57:9 re-think 22:15 return 78:16, 20 79:4, 11, 20 80:15, 19, 23 81:7 82:3, 5, 7, 24 83:10, 17 revealed 90:9 revenue 11:16 13:3 18:1 24:9</p>	<p>52:11 reversed 47:14 review 5:9 38:1 46:8 78:16 Reynolds 2:9 Rick 26:25 rid 47:15 ride 22:22 Rideau 33:4 rider 42:10, 13 riders 39:18 44:8 48:16 riding 16:17, 19 22:4 77:19 Riley 13:17 49:18 risk 24:20 RM 86:4, 5 role 9:22 10:19 21:20, 22 23:16, 20, 21 80:23 84:18, 20 85:21 roles 42:12 room 27:1, 2 88:5 round 44:12 rounds 44:14 routes 41:10, 11, 14 RTG 13:2 17:14, 16 18:23 21:11 24:1, 6, 7 34:9, 12 73:20 74:2 79:21 80:3 87:8 RTG's 18:17 34:17 78:16 RTM 13:2 17:14 33:4 35:4, 14 36:16 54:11, 13 57:17 58:5, 8, 11, 12, 18 59:5, 13, 18, 23 60:9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 24, 25 61:12, 20 62:1, 6 63:11, 25 64:8, 13, 17 65:18 72:25 73:2, 12, 19, 20 74:2, 5, 14, 17, 18, 19 75:5 76:5, 13, 14, 18 77:5, 22 80:3 84:12, 19, 22</p>	<p>86:12, 17 87:8, 12 89:12, 14 90:4 RTM's 58:9 85:1 rude 29:19 rules 27:8, 11 run 20:20, 21 running 17:13 18:8 20:1, 11, 13, 15, 16 41:5 43:14 51:19, 22 58:12 83:25 runs 41:23 73:6 86:10 < S > sad 40:11 saddens 90:17 safe 77:13, 16 78:16, 20 safety 23:6 34:3 54:5, 6 58:11 62:10, 18 68:21 77:20 78:12, 14 85:5, 8 86:23, 25 87:1 88:21 90:7 91:8, 12, 20, 22 saga 35:1 salt 18:16 64:22 Sam 86:7 sample 36:11 Sarah 2:8 3:4 7:3 77:15 sat 26:4 satisfied 17:13 18:9 82:5 Saturday 44:24 scheduled 13:20 screen 6:14 7:5 38:9, 14 39:8 77:10 screens 92:14 Scrimgeour 73:6, 9 script 29:9, 11 scroll 38:14, 17 search 25:20 seats 66:9 seconds 46:11 secrecy 34:15,</p>	<p>23 90:14 secret 34:16 Section 5:14, 15 6:2, 5 sections 30:21 seeking 19:11 send 23:23 27:25 35:20 56:2 77:2 sending 28:4 senior 13:24 17:9 22:23, 24 36:15 59:1 68:15 69:14 70:9 76:12 81:5 sensors 39:6 separate 92:18 separately 86:12 September 3:5 11:25 13:3, 4 38:11, 24 44:23 61:24 62:18, 22 63:1 92:2 serious 18:3 21:9 65:5 seriously 65:10 seriousness 89:21 servant 26:16 serve 7:14 33:23 service 11:15, 17 13:3 16:7, 20 18:1 19:2, 16, 17, 19 20:2 24:9, 18 37:23 41:16, 22 44:1 62:24, 25 78:17, 21 79:4, 11, 20 80:16, 20, 23 81:8 82:3, 5, 7, 24 83:11, 17 services 10:8 19:25 52:11 servicing 76:3 set 96:6 share 4:9 6:15 38:8 61:13 shared 5:4, 10 32:13 66:3 sharing 6:14 7:4 39:8 58:24 Shawn 49:19 71:17, 18 shift 63:3, 5, 6</p>
---	--	--	---	---

shiny 17:25
37:20 66:7, 10
short 12:4
47:21 67:10
90:10
shortcuts 56:22
shorter 41:24
49:9
Shorthand 96:4,
12
Shortly 7:18
57:18
show 6:14
38:13 55:9 78:8
showing 26:15
shrouded 34:15
90:14
shut 25:8, 21
40:3 67:1
71:15, 25
shy 84:11
sick 29:3
side 76:23
signed 9:7
12:2 25:15
26:23 31:4
63:19 65:9
79:22
signing 9:15
63:17
silent 52:15
similar 11:20
simply 25:19
37:4 79:21
simultaneous
42:8
single 10:11, 12,
13 36:2 57:2
83:23 84:1
Singleton 2:9
sink 68:23
72:11
sit 12:21 19:3
56:7
sits 11:8
Sitting 16:22
17:6
skim 56:5
slide 19:8
slip 7:25
slow 88:3
smack 81:12
smell 39:5
social 23:22

35:18 36:10
Society 8:3
soft 17:16, 17
18:10, 13, 23
19:1, 5, 13, 15,
23 23:12 24:1,
4, 18
sold 41:18
solely 66:2
solemn 4:12
solicit 55:10
solicitor 27:1
79:3
solution 58:17
somebody 56:2
sorry 10:5, 12
16:25 17:14
19:20 39:19
48:8 49:19
51:18 53:15
67:18 70:16
84:24
sort 12:8 15:6
40:9, 15 43:5
52:20 57:16
61:5 77:7
80:25 87:3 89:8
sought 33:12
sound 71:4
72:6
sounds 63:8
91:6
source 62:9
space 88:14, 17
spaces 88:15
speak 17:21
23:1 32:14
40:17 48:20
56:9 66:4 74:9
75:12 89:23
speaking 29:10
56:13
specific 33:13
40:17 76:14, 25
77:6 93:18
Specifically
28:15 32:25
36:16 46:22
48:14, 21 53:2
79:11 90:6
93:23
specifics 28:8
speech 55:23,
24

speed 88:9
spent 22:7
spoke 35:12
74:5
spots 41:2
St 66:23
stacked 43:9,
11, 16
staff 12:18
27:6 56:25
stage 10:24
11:2 13:10
14:19 16:12
17:5 83:10
stakeholders
27:18
standing 14:24
15:2, 3, 9, 15
16:7 42:2 44:1
start 6:14
19:16 20:10
30:16 90:12, 13
94:24
started 12:1
15:23, 25 16:11,
13 18:1, 2 26:9,
18 29:2, 7
36:17 47:13
52:12 61:24
74:3 76:21
84:18 86:19
starters 20:12
starts 34:24
state 58:25
70:19 90:14
92:5
statement 69:22
91:25
statements 96:8
stating 84:11
Station 28:14,
17 39:13 40:6
84:2 92:4, 5, 8,
25
stations 66:10,
11 67:13 92:9
**Stenographer/Tra
nscriptionist**
2:14
stenographically
96:10
step 34:6 50:5
56:1
steps 11:23

Steve 54:24
81:6
stick 40:2
stop 7:4 39:8
45:6, 8, 11, 23
46:2, 5 62:3
stopped 28:6
45:5 58:6 78:9
83:22
storage 87:10
88:12
straight 41:12
72:7
strategic 54:16,
17, 18 57:8
strong 79:14
struck 45:21
structure 44:17
stuck 84:2
stuff 11:15
28:15 42:21
stupid 56:18
style 28:19
subcontracted
61:4
subcontractor
61:3
subcontractors
60:21, 23 61:8,
11, 18
subject 47:2
54:24
submissions
45:4
subpar 41:16, 21
subsequent
38:4
substantial 25:3
substantive
57:11
suburbs 41:11
sucks 41:18
suffering 48:7
Sunday 44:24,
25
sunny 67:5
superiors 26:16
support 15:19
43:17, 18 51:10
52:24 80:16
supported 44:2
supports 43:19
suppose 18:25
supposed 20:20

26:21
supposedly 67:1
surprise 17:25
surprised 76:15
surprisingly
44:4
suspected 29:14
switches 39:4
40:5, 6
system 11:24
14:23 16:24
17:5 18:1
21:13, 24 22:4,
7 23:3, 7 37:1,
2 39:16 43:2
55:19, 20 56:8,
11 57:10 58:18
65:5 66:5 67:7,
11, 12, 13 68:1,
9, 10, 17 69:15
70:2, 3, 12
78:14 84:4
86:10 87:5
systemic 56:10
systems 37:21
39:4 69:7

< T >
tabled 12:5
tactics 48:2
talk 15:18 36:7
44:18 63:22
71:11 86:24
90:15
talked 18:8, 9
talking 18:12
27:14, 15, 17
44:22 70:10
72:7 76:25
tax 24:25
taxes 94:19
taxpayers 44:9
team 4:7 28:1
technical 39:11
66:19 68:18, 20,
22 69:4, 5, 6
76:23
Technician 2:15
teeth 72:11
telephone 61:7,
14
tend 5:18, 19
17:14
tendrils 51:7

<p>term 36:19 66:1, 19 91:1 terminated 84:13 terms 13:22 15:8 19:4 21:4 31:17 33:20 41:6 67:17 68:5 69:10 75:9 82:3 84:25 87:4 94:15 testing 21:6 22:9 68:12 text 52:21 theme 32:9 34:25 thing 18:12 23:18 38:25 43:24 52:2 55:4, 21 59:19 63:11 65:5 66:21 92:11 things 9:6 10:21 23:10 25:16 40:10 42:19 46:16, 17 48:6, 10 54:20 60:12, 16 63:2, 18 68:8 69:4 72:18 75:4 76:23 77:25 81:14 82:11 83:20 90:23 92:15 thinking 29:4 44:5 51:22 third 53:11 54:25 62:9 third-party 46:21, 23 thought 8:4 15:20 26:4 37:18, 19 72:18 thoughts 93:17 thousands 42:1 Thursday 57:24 84:5 ticks 42:17 tight 88:5, 14, 15, 17 tighten 63:3, 5 tightened 63:7 tiling 60:22</p>	<p>time 4:16 6:8 7:21 8:19 11:3, 10, 14 14:11 15:1, 4, 10, 21 20:1, 6, 9 22:25 24:21 26:7, 21, 25 28:2, 5, 12 36:17 38:19 42:11, 12 50:18 58:5 64:4 71:3, 6, 16, 19 73:18 74:4 75:9, 16 78:17 87:10, 15 93:13 95:11 96:6, 9 timeline 28:16 times 65:24 69:3 77:22 89:9 timing 9:4 75:13 76:15 title 86:1 today 4:6 6:14 16:23 17:7 49:16 57:25 89:4 95:6, 11 today's 4:10, 11 6:7 told 28:5 32:15, 17 41:22 56:24 79:4 82:25 toothless 71:15 top 63:10 total 31:10 totally 89:14 touch 35:23 touching 87:3 tough 22:6 75:24, 25 TRA 47:18 57:5 58:4, 7, 15, 21 59:3, 4, 11, 20, 24 64:20 78:11 80:1, 4, 10 82:4 84:9 track 66:14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 84:1 tracking 83:23 tracks 39:6 67:14 trail 92:24 train 16:19 20:21 21:24 22:1, 22 24:17 36:2, 6 39:4</p>	<p>45:5, 12, 20, 23 46:2, 4 62:2, 21 63:13, 19 65:4, 10 67:2, 10, 11 68:11, 16 77:14, 16 86:10 92:3, 17 training 59:16 trains 19:24 20:20, 22 21:5 66:9 67:3, 8 83:22, 23, 25 88:3, 8, 13, 18 train's 65:8 84:2 transcribed 4:19 transcript 4:20, 24 5:3, 9, 10, 13 38:22 96:12 Transit 7:15 8:9, 10 9:21, 23 10:16, 20, 22, 23 11:19, 23 12:6 13:7, 9, 14, 15 14:12, 13, 17, 23 15:4, 8 16:6, 8, 16, 23 17:4, 8 18:6 19:6 20:5 21:11, 21, 23 22:10 23:16 25:7, 10, 24 28:13 33:5, 25 36:1, 25 37:7 39:15 41:7, 21 42:9, 10, 13, 24 43:5, 9 48:6, 25 54:14 57:9 69:6 70:5, 11, 14, 18, 22 71:14 72:25 73:18, 21, 23 75:3, 18 78:4, 9, 25 79:15, 17 80:14, 17, 22 82:12, 14 83:15 85:25 90:16, 21 91:16, 17 92:22 93:4, 8, 25 94:7 transition 59:4 transparency 33:9, 21 34:7, 22 35:10 43:20 53:25 62:16 70:24 72:23</p>	<p>93:22 94:17, 25 95:2 transparent 35:9 57:14 62:13 Transpo 10:21, 22 11:3 12:17 13:24 14:8, 10 15:10 17:10 21:10 22:23 33:4 35:3, 13 36:15 37:19 46:14 58:21, 25 61:11, 13, 17 62:1, 6 72:13 76:12 80:1, 3 81:4, 5 82:4 84:14, 16, 17 85:21 86:12, 17, 19, 22 87:2 89:12, 14, 20 90:4 91:9, 13 Transportation 62:10, 17 68:21 85:8 90:6 91:8, 12, 20, 22 Transpo's 84:20 TRA's 57:7 travel 92:6 treat 94:13 treatment 14:21 trees 55:17 trial 5:24 17:13 18:8 20:11, 13, 15, 16 triple-checking 65:7 trouble 64:23 true 68:24 truly 68:22 trust 33:24 34:24 35:1, 3, 4, 13, 15 36:15 42:14 54:1, 2, 9 56:21 58:11 61:25 62:5 63:23, 25 64:8 77:21, 23, 24, 25 87:4 90:3, 5 94:20, 23, 25 truth 69:18 77:7 truthful 89:14, 15</p>	<p>trying 31:1 33:2, 8, 9 43:19, 20 55:22 60:24 81:13 TSB 90:10 tunnels 39:5 Tunney's 21:25 turning 10:15 tweet 35:19 65:21 tweeted 30:12 65:19, 23 twisted 32:22 Twitter 43:15 two-fold 55:13 93:12 two-part 79:9 typically 25:21 32:17 typos 5:9 < U > uncomfortable 22:10 understand 15:13 16:4 18:17 20:7 27:9 34:16 43:5, 7 49:7 50:20 52:3 53:19, 22 54:10, 18 56:24 65:15, 16 68:23 73:11 83:20 93:1 understanding 8:12 19:15, 23 20:12, 15, 19, 22 24:6 61:16 68:25 79:25 84:20 85:3 88:6, 14, 16 92:10 unfair 28:18 31:14 unfortunate 94:22 unfortunately 31:21 51:16 54:23 63:9 unpleasant 68:9 unpopular 80:18 unreasonable 28:11</p>
---	---	--	---	--

unredacted

25:11, 13, 18
30:9, 12
untrue 45:7, 8
update 12:14,
17, 21 13:14, 19
15:5 16:7 44:1,
10 82:15, 18
93:5
updates 11:12,
14 12:19 13:7,
21 14:18 15:5
81:8
upset 36:13
Urquhart 2:9
user 8:9, 10
16:16 39:16
57:10 94:19

< V >

vanilla 46:1
various 11:7
24:13
vehicles 34:1
59:20 68:1
verbal 45:4
version 25:14
30:9, 13 33:18
47:21
versions 30:18
**Videoconferenci
ng** 1:9
view 11:22
23:1 24:19
46:10 54:9
56:6, 8 60:10
63:10 64:14
68:1 70:13
78:24 79:1
83:16
viewed 92:19
viewing 78:21
Virtual 2:15
46:9 58:10
Vogel 2:10
volunteer 7:25
94:10
volunteering 8:4
volunteers 7:20
vote 9:12, 14
13:18 15:11
16:9 25:16
26:21 31:6
44:4 50:5 52:5

votes 50:19

< W >

waiting 23:23
walk 28:16
walking 42:2
wanted 23:25
75:4, 5 89:3
91:4 95:8
wanting 15:19
wants 81:12
Wardle 2:9
95:7, 9
warm 67:5
warn 53:4
Watson 43:13,
14, 18 48:1, 24
50:1, 4, 16, 17,
21 51:3, 4, 11,
23 52:8, 24
72:3 80:19
ways 12:16
WC 43:14
web 55:5
website 4:25
49:14 62:13
Wednesday 45:1
week 28:1 47:9
57:23, 24 83:23
84:4 85:5
weekend 7:24
weekly 84:3
weeks 19:2
37:22 40:4
wheelhouse
68:20
wheels 39:5, 6
40:7
whichever 49:5
whiff 34:23
white 41:17
79:3 80:20
White's 79:12
willing 57:4
72:10
wish 23:7, 10
71:14
witness 5:15,
19, 22
wonder 88:11
won't 8:2
woods 26:11
word 17:1
31:22, 23 32:1

46:25 54:6, 8
wording 46:22
words 28:23
71:12
work 7:25
10:16 21:23
35:7 43:6
47:18 51:6
53:10, 21 55:6,
8 57:7, 11, 15
63:15, 16, 18
65:9 74:10, 14
81:14 90:7
93:19
workday 10:13
worked 26:12,
13 30:1, 3 47:6
55:7, 10, 14
56:8, 15 57:3
63:2
working 7:24
37:14
works 27:8
55:11 87:16
92:12
worried 84:9
worry 41:18
89:18
worst 42:5
worth 41:19
**WRIGHT-
GILBERT** 1:5
2:8, 10 3:4 4:2,
4 6:11, 19, 22
7:3, 6, 16 9:4,
18 10:2, 18
11:1 12:1
13:12 14:25
15:16 16:14, 25
17:6 18:14
19:20 20:14
22:15 23:17
25:4 26:3
30:14, 19 32:4
33:16, 20 35:16
36:23 37:3
38:12, 18 39:19,
22 43:3 48:17
49:3, 8, 12, 17
50:8, 11, 15
53:7, 15, 24
57:13 58:23
60:8, 11 64:15
65:23 66:2
68:5 69:16

70:16 73:25
75:14 78:23
80:25 83:12, 19
85:24 86:5
87:25 89:2, 7
91:14 93:21
write 27:16, 17
writing 27:6
38:16, 19 47:13
50:7 55:23
written 19:8
37:10 40:10
69:24 70:4, 6
wrong 38:6
40:11 50:5, 6
72:15 82:22
86:1
wrote 38:10
50:4 53:1

< Y >

Yeah 13:12
26:3 32:4 48:8
75:17 81:24
85:19 90:24
95:1
year 57:20
74:20 75:7
years 17:7
18:4 33:1
41:21 65:14
YouTube 46:10

< Z >

Zoom 1:9