Ottawa Light Rail Commission

Stephen Blais on Tuesday, May 10, 2022



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5	OTTAWA LIGHT RAIL COMMISSION
6	CITY OF OTTAWA - STEPHEN BLAIS
7	MAY 10, 2022
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13	Held via Zoom Videoconferencing, with all
14	participants attending remotely, on the 10th day
15	of May, 2022, 9:03 a.m. to 11:49 a.m.
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    COMMISSION COUNSEL:
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    Liz McLellan, Litigation Counsel Member
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    Emily Young, Litigation Counsel Member
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    PARTICIPANTS:
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    Stephen Blais, City of Ottawa
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    Peter Wardle and Lauren Gruenberger,
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    Singleton, Urquhart, Reynolds, Vogel LLP
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15
    Francois Landry, KRB Law
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    ALSO PRESENT:
19
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    Judith Caputo, Stenographer/Transcriptionist
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    Chris Delic, Virtual Technician
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1	INDEX OF EXHIBITS
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3	NUMBER/DESCRIPTION PAGE NO.
4	(None).
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10	* * The following is a list of documents undertaken
11	to be produced or other items to be followed up \ast \ast
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13	INDEX OF UNDERTAKINGS
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15	The documents to be produced are noted by U/T and
16	appear on the following pages: 117:3
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1	Upon commencing at 9:03 a.m.
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3	STEPHEN BLAIS: AFFIRMED.
4	LIZ McLELLAN: Good morning, Mr. Blais.
5	My name is Liz McLellan, I am Commission Counsel,
6	and I will be conducting your interview today.
7	I'm joined by Emily Young, who is also
8	Commission Counsel. I'm going to read you a brief
9	script and we'll get started.
10	The purpose of today's interview is to
11	obtain your evidence under oath or solemn
12	declaration for use at the Commission's Public
13	Hearings.
14	This will be a collaborative interview,
15	such that my co-counsel, Ms. Young, may intervene
16	to ask certain questions. If time permits, your
17	counsel may also ask follow-up questions at the end
18	of this interview.
19	This interview is being transcribed,
20	and 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 б 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 made will be appended 13 to the transcript. 14 Pursuant to Section 33 (6) of the 15 Public Inquiries Act 2009: A witness at an inquiry 16 shall be deemed to have objected to answer any 17 question asked him or her on the ground that his or 18 her answer may tend to incriminate the witness, or 19 may tend to establish his or her liability to civil 20 proceedings at the instance of the Crown or of any 21 person, and no answer given by the witness at an 22 inquiry shall be used or be receivable in evidence 23 against him or her in any trial or other 24 proceedings against him or her thereafter taking 25 place, other than a prosecution for perjury, in

1 giving such evidence. 2 As required by Section 33 (7) of that 3 Act, you are hereby advised that you have the right to object to answer any question under Section 5 of 4 5 the Canada Evidence Act. 6 And to confirm, you've been sworn this 7 morning or affirmed, Mr. Blais? 8 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes, thank you. 9 LIZ MCLELLAN: So we will begin your 10 interview. 11 First of all, I understand that you 12 were elected as the MPP for Orléans in February 13 2020 after a by-election, and you are currently a 14 candidate in the provincial election for the riding 15 of Orléans? 16 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. 17 LIZ MCLELLAN: And you were a 18 Councillor for the Cumberland Ward from 2010 to 19 October 2019? 20 STEPHEN BLAIS: No, I resigned Council 21 in March of 2020, a week or two after the 22 by-election. 23 LIZ McLELLAN: Did you have any 24 involvement in the LRT prior to your election to 25 Council in 2010?

1 STEPHEN BLAIS: Just as a citizen and 2 consultation, public consultation. 3 So you attended the LIZ MCLELLAN: 4 public consultations? 5 STEPHEN BLAIS: I believe that I did, 6 ves. 7 In what capacity? LIZ MCLELLAN: 8 STEPHEN BLAIS: As a citizen. 9 LIZ MCLELLAN: Did you just observe, or 10 were you there representing a citizen group? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: I was there on my own. 12 I may have spoken or submitted written comments, I 13 don't recall specifics, but certainly I was very 14 aware of what was going on. 15 LIZ McLELLAN: You don't recall 16 comments that you would have made, either written 17 or by way of comments in, say, a public meeting? 18 I don't recall the STEPHEN BLAIS: 19 specifics. I was a critic of the light rail plan 20 before I was elected so they were likely critical 21 comments. 22 (Reporter sought clarification). 23 If there are any STEPHEN BLAIS: 24 written comments, they are likely critical of the 25 I don't recall the specifics, though. plan.

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1	LIZ McLELLAN: Why were you critical of
2	the LRT plan?
3	STEPHEN BLAIS: The LRT was not coming
4	to Orléans, despite Orléans having the highest
5	public ridership in the area of the City, and it
6	seemed like a missed opportunity, given that
7	Mr. O'Brien and his Conservative cohorts had ripped
8	up the previous plan and decided to start fresh.
9	It seemed like a missed opportunity to
10	extend the train to the community that had the
11	highest public ridership of OC Transpo.
12	LIZ McLELLAN: So was that your main
13	area of concern, or did you have other areas that
14	you were critical of?
15	STEPHEN BLAIS: That was my primary
16	area of concern. It was also, given Mayor
17	O'Brien's track record on not being realistic with
18	budget numbers, I was concerned that the
19	\$2.1 billion dollars would not be
20	Reporter's Note: (Experienced
21	virtual connection difficulties).
22	LIZ McLELLAN: Let's go back on the
23	record and let's begin from, Mr. Blais, your
24	involvement in public consultations in 2009.
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: So, as I mentioned, I

1	was critical of the plan, because the plan did not
2	include an extension to Orléans, which had largely
3	been the rationale for Larry O'Brien and his
4	conservative counterparts to Council, Bob
5	Chiarelli's first LRT plan was that it didn't go
6	east-west, and Orléans is obviously in the east.
7	There was also significant concern,
8	given Mr. O'Brien's tendency to exaggerate certain
9	financial issues throughout his term as Mayor, that
10	the \$2.1 billion hard construction costs for the
11	train would be real, and could be met.
12	And so I expressed concerns about both
13	those facts. Or concerns.
14	LIZ McLELLAN: So we'll speak about
15	specifically you being the Chair of the Transit
16	Commission and Chair of the Transportation
17	Committee, but first your involvement as a
18	Councillor from 2010 to 2019 on the LRT project.
19	I'd like you to outline how you were involved.
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. So as a
21	candidate for election in the 2010 cycle, I was by
22	no means the only one with concerns about the light
23	rail program as it stood at that point.
24	I believe the Mayor was also concerned,
25	and so there was an evaluation as to whether or not

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1	the \$2.1 billion was realistic.
2	Following that evaluation, I believe it
3	came out that it was going to be something like
4	2.5 or 2.6 billion dollars in real terms, and I
5	don't remember if that was net present value or if
6	that was just construction dollars in 2010. I'd
7	have to go back and take a look, but it was going
8	to be
9	4 or 5 hundred million dollars over what had been
10	promised.
11	So an exercise was undertaken to
12	determine what efficiencies could be sought, or
13	could the program be delivered for the \$2.1 billion
14	figure that had been promised by Mr. O'Brien and
15	his Conservative colleagues over a number of years.
16	That led to the realignment of the
17	downtown tunnel, and there were likely other
18	cost-saving measures, I don't recall all the
19	specifics. But the realignment of the downtown
20	portion was, I believe, the most significant. The
21	tunnel was made more shallow, and that brought the
22	figure back down to the \$2.1 billion range.
23	And so as a member of Council, I would
24	have participated in the various Staff
25	presentations to Council about that process. And

1 deliberated the process to begin the request for --2 they weren't requests for information, they were 3 the requests for consortiums to come together to 4 qualify, so those requests for qualifications, 5 excuse me, for the process. 6 And then ultimately, when the three 7 consortia were qualified, would have participated 8 in the public discussions at Council about the 9 Staff's ultimate recommendation to go with RTG. 10 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: And, you know, that's 12 in that timeframe from 2010 to 2014, or when the 13 program, you know, was -- when the contract was 14 signed and the program began. 15 LIZ McLELLAN: And then we'll get into 16 more detail later, but what about 2014 to 2019 or 17 early 2020, as you say. 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. So actually from 19 late 2014, from December 2014 until December 2018, 20 I was the Chair of the Transit Commission, which is 21 responsible for the service provision of 22 OC Transpo, Ottawa's public transit service. 23 OC Transpo did not have carriage of the 24 LRT file. That rested with the Finance and 25 Economic Development Committee from a construction

1	and contract management perspective, etcetera.
2	Our role at the Transit Commission, as
3	it related to LRT, was about making the changes
4	necessary within the organization, and in
5	particular, within the bus network itself to get
6	ready for the introduction of a multimodal transit
7	service in 2018.
8	So there were, you know, public
9	consultations about bus routes. OC Transpo did a
10	number of envisioning exercises. I participated in
11	one where we met with, you know, citizens, everyday
12	bus riders, employees of OC Transpo, bus drivers,
13	etcetera, to map out the what we called "The
14	Journey".
15	So mapping out the customer journey
16	throughout the process of, you know, getting on a
17	bus in the morning to getting to your destination
18	at the end, to identify the potential pain points
19	of the transition, and try to better understand
20	exactly what our customers went through every day.
21	So there was a series of consultations and meetings
22	about that. Certainly, I participated in many of
23	those.
24	We transformed the bus network to

We transformed the bus network to remove the express bus service in anticipation of 12

1	the train coming online. When we did that, we also
2	significantly reduced fares for suburban bus riders
3	to accommodate the removal of the express bus
4	service. And we were generally preoccupied with
5	transitioning the service to the introduction of
6	the multimodal system.
7	LIZ McLELLAN: You referenced changes
8	within OC Transpo that were required and that the
9	Transit Commission was looking at; what were you
10	referring to?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: The entire bus network
12	changed through the period of 2014 and 2018. And
13	that was required by the transition of there
14	were several stages.
15	First was, the Transitway was coming
16	out of service, because rail construction was going
17	to begin on the Transitway. So there needed to be
18	alternative methods to move people from the entry
19	points of the Transitway in both the east and west
20	into the downtown, without having that dedicated
21	corridor. So there was a series of transitions to
22	the bus service to accommodate that change.
23	There was sorry, I'm being told I'm
24	being logged out of my account, if you can give me
25	a moment to re-enter my credentials here.

1 Off the record, please. LIZ MCLELLAN: 2 -- OFF THE RECORD DISCUSSION --3 Let's go back on the LIZ MCLELLAN: 4 record. 5 I think you were coming to an end on 6 You were speaking about different your answer. 7 changes that had to happen in OC Transpo, so it 8 changed from a BRT to an LRT. 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. So we had to make 10 changes to the system to account for the fact that 11 the BRT system on the Transitway would not be in 12 service for a period of several years. So there 13 was that change to routes and schedules that was 14 complicated, and difficult, and challenging for 15 riders and customers for sure. 16 Then the system had to be adapted 17 again, as we prepared to introduce the LRT into 18 service. And that preparation began, or I should 19 say those system changes were made either three 20 months or six months before the anticipated RSA to 21 give some time for the adaptation to happen. 22 And there were some issues about how 23 drivers were scheduled based on their collective 24 agreements, etcetera. And so there was a series of 25 changes to the bus network through there, including 14

1	the elimination of the express fare for suburban
2	riders.
3	LIZ McLELLAN: And you touched sort of
4	on your role as the Chair of the Transit
5	Commission, but if we can go into more detail on
6	that. So you were appointed the Chair in 2014; is
7	that correct?
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. Council voted on
9	that in December of 2014.
10	LIZ McLELLAN: Okay. And how was your
11	name put forward for Council to vote for your
12	appointment?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: After every election,
14	Council appoints a committee that I can't
15	remember the name of the committee but it's a
16	committee that makes recommendations about
17	appointments to committees.
18	This is a one-time committee that
19	meets, I think, once or twice after every election
20	before Council starts to sit. And so that
21	committee recommended me to be Chair of the Transit
22	Commission, I'm sure as a result of conversations
23	that I had with the Mayor and his Staff.
24	LIZ McLELLAN: And when were you the
25	Chair of the Transit Committee until?

1 STEPHEN BLAIS: Until that same process 2 happened after the 2018 election. So it would have 3 been in December of 2018. 4 LIZ MCLELLAN: Who took over for you as 5 Chair? 6 STEPHEN BLAIS: Allan Hubley. 7 LIZ McLELLAN: You spoke a little bit 8 to the role of the Transit Commission, but in terms 9 of relating specifically to the LRT, how does the 10 Transit Commission relate to the operation of the 11 LRT? 12 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, at the moment, 13 since rail has come into service, LRT is a part of 14 OC Transpo like any other aspect of the public 15 transit system. 16 When I sat on the Transit Commission 17 and was Chair of the Transit Commission, that was 18 not the case. We were preparing to receive LRT, 19 but carriage of the file and supervision of the 20 work, was the Finance and Economic Development 21 Committee. 22 LIZ MCLELLAN: And typically, I 23 understand that this may not be applicable to your 24 time as the Chair of the Transit Commission, but if 25 the Transit Commission sees an issue with their

1	scope of work, within their scope of work, what
2	remedies or powers does the Transit Commission have
3	in identifying that issue and resolving it?
4	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, so the scope of
5	work for any committee is dictated by City Council
6	as a whole. I believe it's in the procedural
7	bylaw, or some bylaw similar to that. But Council
8	dictates which files are the responsibility and
9	within the scope of various committees.
10	That's typically done two times during
11	Council term, immediately after the election, or as
12	a governance review. If I recall, that normally
13	takes place in the first quarter, January to March
14	timeframe.
15	And then there is typically also a
16	midterm governance review which is much smaller,
17	which happens at the midterm to round out any edges
18	or look for smaller opportunities to make
19	improvements. But the larger changes to that are
20	typically handled shortly after the election,
21	because the theory, at least, is that each Council
22	is unto itself, no Council can tell a future
23	Council what to do. And so the new Council
24	basically determines its rules and procedure after
25	

1	LIZ McLELLAN: How are the results of
2	the governance reviews communicated to Council?
3	STEPHEN BLAIS: Typically,
4	Mr. O'Connor, who was the City Clerk at the time,
5	or Ms. Donnelly who was Deputy City Clerk, would do
6	a round of consultations with councillors to see if
7	there were any changes that councillors were
8	looking for. To sometimes do a poll to see which
9	changes were more acceptable to a broader group of
10	people than others. To see if there was any kind
11	of consensus forming through that kind of informal
12	part of the process. And then ultimately, if I
13	recall correctly, ultimately there is a Staff
14	report that comes forward to Council for
15	consideration and Council ultimately decides.
16	LIZ McLELLAN: So are governance review
17	reports an annual thing? And then I think you also
18	spoke to them being midterm, so two years into the
19	current Council's mandate?
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, the practice when
21	I was on Council, was to look at governance twice.
22	A large change after each election, or a potential
23	for a large change after each election, and then a
24	opportunity for a midterm minor course correction.
25	This is sometimes when committee chairs

1 might change, or committee membership might change, and there might be some other rules that were 2 3 changed to adapt to particularities of what was 4 happening. 5 I'm not a lawyer, so I don't know if 6 there's any legal impediment to governance changes 7 happening outside of those processes, but while I 8 was on Council, those were the main processes or 9 the main timeframes, I should say, and processes to 10 make governance changes. 11 LIZ MCLELLAN: So you're no longer the 12 Chair of the Transit Commission as of 2018? 13 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. 14 LIZ McLELLAN: And then you become --15 vou win an election in 2020 and became the MPP 16 for Orléans. 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. 18 LIZ MC LELLAN: Between that time, were 19 you following the work of the Transit Commission? 20 STEPHEN BLAIS: Like all committees of 21 the City of Ottawa, ultimately the work of 22 committees comes to Council. So I was paying 23 attention to the degree at a high level to make 24 decisions at Council about what transit was talking 25 about.

1 I was certainly aware of some of the 2 challenges that were being faced by OC Transpo as a 3 result of the delay in LRT service, because the 4 routes had been changed, as I mentioned, to conform 5 to LRT. 6 LRT was obviously not in service, so 7 that was creating some -- not some, but guite a bit 8 of disruption to bus riders, understandably so. 9 As I mentioned earlier, Orléans has the 10 highest transit ridership of any part of the City. 11 I represent Orléans, so I was keenly aware of the 12 challenges that were being faced by commuters. And 13 so I was certainly aware of those discussions and 14 issues. 15 I could not recall any kind of 16 technical, real technical discussions or changes, 17 you know, in that timeframe, outside of the broader 18 challenges with LRT being behind schedule. 19 LIZ McLELLAN: And can you describe the 20 challenges that you recall? 21 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. So as I 22 mentioned, the entirety of the system was 23 redesigned to account for the train being in the 24 Transitway. 25 So as an example, before those

1	transitions, you know, someone who is in Orléans, I
2	could walk to the end of my street or the next
3	major street, hop on a single bus, and be downtown
4	in 45 minutes or 50 minutes having taken one bus to
5	get there.
6	The change that we had made was to
7	reorient those express buses towards the LRT system
8	in a more direct way. And, obviously, we had been
9	planning for there to be a transfer point at, you
10	know, in the east at the terminal station at Blair
11	and west at Tunney's Pasture.
12	So for the period of construction the
13	east end buses were effectively using the Queensway
14	to navigate into the City. Which if you live in
15	Ottawa, you know there's already congestion, so
16	that was very difficult.
17	In the west end, they were taking
18	similar local roads in order to get to Tunney's
19	Pasture. And so there had already been a great
20	deal of frustration on the part of riders for a
21	period of two or three years leading up to
22	delivery.
23	That had been discussed, or baked in as
24	part of the construction process, and you know, I

²⁵ think people were generally willing to accept it as

1 a minor inconvenience in the long-term of the 2 benefit of receiving the train. 3 And so when the delays in delivery 4 continued, there was the, you know, frustration of 5 that process continuing. 6 There had also been a -- there had been 7 a service change anticipating the launch of the 8 train, which I believe happened about three months 9 before the anticipated launch. That was in the 10 absence of the train that was causing frustration, 11 I believe there was overcrowding and delays. Ι 12 don't remember the nature specifics of that, but 13 there was frustration definitely related to that 14 particular change. 15 And because there was so much 16 uncertainty about what the new delivery date of the 17 train would be, there was hesitancy from OC Transpo 18 to revert back to the old bus model, or the old 19 schedule, I should say, because of the amount of 20 time it takes to work out the schedules for the 21 collective agreement, and how the system is 22 connected and interlined together. 23 The train delays were effectively 24 communicated almost as quarterly delays. And so 25 OC Transpo did not feel that a reversion of that

1 magnitude was worth simply the three months. 2 I think if you were to look at it and 3 knew that it would be almost more than a year 4 delayed, I'm sure that there would have been 5 considerations to changing back, but I wasn't on 6 Transit Commission at that time, so I wasn't part 7 of those discussions. But that's as I understand 8 was the main crux of the big concerns. 9 LIZ McLELLAN: And so from your 10 position as a Councillor, and you were following 11 the situation closely, do you feel that the Transit 12 Commission did a good job in the scope of their 13 mandate during that time? 14 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, certainly the 15 Transit Commission, as I recall, people were 16 raising various issues of concern. 17 I think hindsight is always 20-20. Had 18 everyone known that the train would miss, I think 19 three subsequent RSAs, if memory serves, I think 20 decisions would have been different. I anticipate 21 Staff recommendations would have been different. 22 But, you know, I wasn't in the day-to-day meetings 23 of the Transit Commission, so I can't really 24 comment on specifics. But it was a very fluid 25 situation, because of the delays to the system.

1	I'm sorry, I can't speak to it after,
2	obviously I left transit. In those first six
3	months of delay, I guess, I was still there and it
4	was very difficult to deal with.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: And you were appointed
6	the Chair of the Transportation Committee in 2018;
7	is that right?
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes.
9	LIZ McLELLAN: And what's the
10	difference in mandate between the Transit
11	Commission and the Transportation Committee?
12	STEPHEN BLAIS: The Transit
13	Commission's mandate is solely the operation of
14	OC Transpo, the Public Transit Agency in Ottawa.
15	While I was there, it was largely a
16	single mode system. We had the old O-train, but
17	ridership on that proportionately was quite small,
18	so it was effectively a bus-only system.
19	The Transit Commission now is a fully
20	multimodal system, and so the dynamics are much
21	different than they are today.
22	The Transportation Committee is
23	responsible for the long-term transportation
24	planning of the City, so the Transportation Master
25	Plan and, generally, transportation policy. So,

1 you know, pedestrian priority versus cyclists 2 versus vehicles as an example. 3 Also, the day-to-day operations of snow 4 clearing, road maintenance, grass maintenance, 5 along the medians and the sides of the roads and 6 the parks and things of that nature. 7 LIZ MCLELLAN: Does the Transportation 8 Committee have a role in the oversight of the LRT? 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: A role in the 10 oversight, not directly. Through my time as 11 Chair of the Transit Commission, myself and Keith 12 Eqli as Chair of the Transportation Committee were 13 invited to several briefings about LRT. These were 14 not decision-making meetings or oversight, they 15 were informational. 16 Oversight of the LRT project during 17 construction was the Finance and Economic 18 Development Committee. 19 LIZ MCLELLAN: Before I move on to 20 another area of discussion, I'm going to check in 21 on my colleague, Ms. Young, to see if she has 22 questions. 23 EMILY YOUNG: I did have one. And I 24 was just wondering what Mr. Blais' view was on the 25 cost reductions that ultimately brought the budget

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1	down to 2.1, and whether at the time you still had
2	concerns about whether the budget could be met or
3	whether those were allayed by the realignment of
4	the tunnel and other measures taken?
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, certainly the
6	realignment of the tunnel and the shallowing of the
7	tunnel, we were told by subject matter experts,
8	would reduce significantly the cost of
9	construction.
10	Coupled with the contract that would
11	protect the City from cost overruns, that was
12	eventually sought and achieved, that led me to be
13	supportive of the project.
14	There was also, Council passed a motion
15	to review on a priority basis, the acceleration of
16	light rail to Orléans which alleviated well, not
17	alleviated, but addressed my concern in the moment
18	about planning for the future to my community. And
19	the combination of those things allowed me to vote
20	for the project.
21	EMILY YOUNG: So it sounds like a big
22	part of that was the fact that this was going to
23	proceed by public-private partnership that included
24	a fixed price contract?
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, I don't know that

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1	the model mattered as much to me as the fact there
2	was a fixed price contract that guaranteed that the
3	risk was on the provider. There may be other
4	procurement models that would do that, but
5	certainly this model did that.
6	And as I said, we had made extensive
7	progress on both discussions with Staff, but also
8	political conversations about the potential
9	extension to Orléans in the next phase of the
10	program. And those things together, allowed me to
11	support the program.
12	LIZ McLELLAN: So do you recall how the
13	budget was initially set? The estimate, the first
14	estimate?
15	STEPHEN BLAIS: Under Larry O'Brien?
16	LIZ McLELLAN: Yes.
17	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. It was actually
18	originally \$1.8 billion, this goes back to late
19	2003, early 2004. There was an agreement between
20	Jim Watson, who was the Minister of Consumer
21	Business Services and Regional Minister for Ottawa
22	Provincially. David Pratt, who was the MP for
23	Nepean-Carleton, I believe he was in Cabinet at
24	that stage in the Martin Government and Bob
25	Chiarelli, that Ottawa was going to need light

1 rail, Bob had a vision for it. And there were discussions about how each order of government 2 3 could put into the proposal all together. 4 That led to, I believe it was 5 400 million each at that point to get it to 1.2, if 6 I recall correctly. And then over time, that 7 ballooned to 1.8. 8 And as you recall, the 2006 mayoralty 9 campaign was largely fought on the original light 10 rail plan, where Larry O'Brien conspired with John 11 Baird and other conservatives to cancel the program 12 after the municipal election. 13 LIZ MC LELLAN: Are you referring to 14 the north-south LRT? 15 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. 16 LIZ MCLELLAN: Do you recall any other 17 issues with the north-south LRT beyond a political 18 decision? 19 STEPHEN BLAIS: No. It was 100 percent 20 politics. It was an election issue and 21 conservatives didn't like Bob Chiarelli, and Larry 22 O'Brien said he could bring taxes in at zero and he 23 would go east-west and that was the election. 24 -- Reporter's Note: (Experienced 25 virtual connection difficulties).

1 LIZ McLELLAN: So we talked, Mr. Blais, 2 the question about the \$1.8 million estimate and if 3 you recall how that came to be. 4 STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes. So in 2004, there 5 was conversations about Ottawa proceeding with a б transition to light rail, the O-train had been a 7 successful, or some believe a successful pilot 8 project. 9 There were conversations, trilateral 10 conversations between the Federal, Provincial and 11 Municipal Governments set out a funding agreement. 12 The agreement was \$400 million each, which would 13 bring it to \$1.2 billion, this was sometime in 14 2004. 15 There was a presentation of the O-train 16 at the Fallowfield Train Station with the Premier 17 and other dignitaries, it's a matter of public 18 Through between 2004 and 2006, that cost record. 19 escalated into 1.8. 20 There was quite a bit of public 21 dialogue about whether or not that was too 22 expensive and/or if the train was going to the 23 right communities. That led to a 2006 mayoralty 24 campaign between Alex Munter, Bob Chiarelli and 25 Larry O'Brien promised to freeze Larry O'Brien.

1	taxes, which he never did. And he promised to hit
2	the reset button the LRT program.
3	Once he won the election, he worked
4	with John Baird, who's the Conservative Member of
5	Parliament for Ottawa West Nepean and Senior
6	Cabinet Minister in the region.
7	I understand that other conservative
8	politicians from South Ottawa were also involved,
9	and they gave the City an option to back out of the
10	funding agreement and effectively killed light
11	rail. It cost the City \$100 million. A
12	\$40 million lawsuit with Siemens, \$60 million in
13	lost investment and Staff time and other cash and
14	expenses, and lost a funding round of \$400 million
15	from senior orders of government.
16	And so that led to Mr. O'Brien his
17	first transit plan included, I believe, six or
18	seven rail extensions across the City, including
19	out to Rockland and Alexandria and Brockville. And
20	he had David Collenette come in and redo an entire
21	transit plan for the region. That was a giant led
22	balloon and didn't go anywhere. And eventually
23	they came up with the East-West Light Rail Program
24	that has over time, morphed into what is now the
25	Confederation Line.

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1	LIZ McLELLAN: When you were elected in
2	2010 the East-West LRT is already an area for
3	discussion for City Council; can you walk us
4	through the development of the 2.1 budget and the
5	reports that went to you during your time in
6	Council?
7	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yeah, sure. So 2.1 was
8	the number that was being used by Mr. O'Brien and
9	his administration towards the end of his term as
10	Mayor, and was largely the discussion point in the
11	election of 2010. There was a great deal of
12	concern as to whether or not and he was saying
13	that was the price bottom line, fixed price,
14	etcetera, etcetera.
15	Given that he had failed to achieve his
16	other economic and fiscal promises, there was a
17	great deal of concern that that was not accurate.
18	Either shortly before the election or shortly after
19	the election, it came out that the \$2.1 billion was
20	the that annual estimate. So I believe it was
21	either the 2009 or 2010 estimate of cost of
22	construction that year, and did not build in time
23	value of money for real year construction.
24	So ultimately it was realized that the
25	plan would be in the 2.5 or 2.6 billion dollar

1	range. I believe the Mayor had committed to the
2	train, provided that it was actually 2.1. During
3	the election, I believe that was a campaign promise
4	he had made. And so as a result of this
5	escalation, because of the previous Council's
6	failure to accurately communicate costs, an
7	exercise was undertaken to seeing if the program
8	could be delivered for the communicated
9	\$2.1 billion.
10	That work progressed, and eventually we
11	were presented a plan that achieved \$2.1 billion
12	price tag. It included, effectively, the length of
13	the original proposal, reoriented the tunnel in a
14	more direct east-west path through the downtown as

¹⁴ more direct east-west path through the downtown as ¹⁵ opposed to diagonal path, and the tunnel was ¹⁶ ultimately much more shallow. And those were, as I ¹⁷ understand it, the large changes that the led to ¹⁸ the cost control.

19 We then proceeded to do a request for 20 qualifications. That process took place, three 21 consortia ultimately qualified, or were finalists 22 for that; RTG was one of them. I don't remember what the other's names were, but it was typically, 23 24 you know, Ottawa landmarks and things like that 25 they threw in for their names. And eventually

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1	Staff brought us a report recommending RTG as the
2	successful proponent.
3	And there were some reports in there of
4	the various procurement models that Staff would
5	pursue.
6	LIZ McLELLAN: But generally you were
7	concerned that the \$2.1 billion figure was too low.
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: Can you repeat the
9	question?
10	LIZ McLELLAN: Generally you were
11	concerned that the \$2.1 billion estimate or figure
12	was too low?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: Generally, I was
14	concerned it was too expensive for not achieving a
15	train to Orléans.
16	I was concerned that the original
17	estimate of \$2.1 billion that Larry O'Brien and his
18	Council presented, was not accurate based on their
19	track record of not delivering on what they
20	promised.
21	LIZ McLELLAN: Were you concerned about
22	project risks, or capping costs as a result of the
23	budget?
24	STEPHEN BLAIS: I'm not sure as a
25	result of the budget I was concerned about those

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1	things. I was certainly concerned about project
2	risks when you're digging a tunnel, and that's why
3	when the ultimate procurement model was presented
4	of risk transfer to the proponent, that was part of
5	my rationale for being able to support the program.
6	LIZ MCLELLAN: So we'll go back to
7	procurement. But in terms of delegation of
8	authority between City Staff to undertake certain
9	decisions, and understanding the authority over the
10	LRT and how that was attributed amongst City Staff,
11	what aspects of the LRT did Council make about the
12	LRT while you were a Councillor?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: Can you be more
14	specific or refine your question?
15	LIZ McLELLAN: Generally, what types of
16	decision points on the LRT would go to Council?
17	STEPHEN BLAIS: Oh, sure. So we would
18	have approved the environmental assessment and
19	other kind of pre-project work through a Staff
20	report.
21	We would have likely laid out a general
22	framework for which we wanted Staff to pursue the
23	project with high level guidance on, you know,
24	budget and scope of work, etcetera.
25	We would have approved the beginning of

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1	a request for qualifications process. We would
2	have approved the model by which they were looking
3	to build; so ultimately, the DBFM model. And
4	ultimately we would have made a decision we
5	would have formalized the decision to award the
6	contract based on Staff advice. And all these
7	decisions were based on Staff advice and Staff
8	reports.
9	LIZ McLELLAN: What was your
10	understanding of the environmental assessment and
11	the figures it presented, and the finality of an
12	environmental assessment?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: So in fairness, this
14	was over a decade ago, so I don't recall many
15	specifics of the environmental assessment.
16	In terms of finality, very few things
17	with environmental assessments are ever final. I
18	know that from my experience working on
19	infrastructure projects. But specifics of that
20	assessment, I don't recall.
21	LIZ McLELLAN: Okay. Are you familiar
22	with the Executive Steering Committee and what it
23	was responsible for?
24	STEPHEN BLAIS: Is this the City's
25	broad Executive Steering Committee, or are you

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1	talking about some other committee for light rail?
2	LIZ McLELLAN: The Executive Steering
3	Committee that was struck for the purposes of
4	oversight of the LRT.
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: I have some broad
6	recollection of it. I can probably take guesses as
7	to who was on it. In fairness, I haven't given
8	that a lot of thought in a very long time.
9	LIZ McLELLAN: Did you have any
10	interactions with the Executive Steering Committee
11	meeting, like would they brief Council?
12	STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall. We
13	certainly received briefings about light rail,
14	either at Committee or Council, and sometimes in
15	individual meetings. But I don't recall if it was
16	I rarely remember having a committee meet, we'd
17	often get briefings from Nancy or other officials
18	individually, and sometimes with Staff support.
19	LIZ McLELLAN: For the sake of the
20	record, "Nancy" is Nancy Schepers, correct?
21	STEPHEN BLAIS: That's right, yes.
22	LIZ McLELLAN: What was the Finance and
23	Economic Development Committee responsible for?
24	STEPHEN BLAIS: So the entire light
25	rail program, based on the terms of reference of

1	the Committee, and the governance decisions that
2	Council had made. Finance and Economic Development
3	Committee would be responsible for the entirety of
4	the light rail program.
5	So typically, as a Staff report or a
6	Staff recommendation travels through its process,
7	it's assigned to the responsibility of one of the
8	City of Ottawa's standing committees, and so it
9	would have been assigned to FEDCO. And so all
10	Staff reports relating to light rail would have run
11	up through FEDCO. So a report arrives at FEDCO,
12	with whatever it's either an information report
13	or a decision-making report, there is opportunity
14	for Staff to present. If it's in a public meeting,
15	there's an opportunity for members of the public to
16	present. Members of the committee can then ask
17	questions, move motions to amend the report. Other
18	members of Council are allowed to sit in and
19	participate, they simply can't vote at Committee.
20	And so the Committee receives that
21	information, and either receives it as information
22	or makes decisions about certain things and
23	transmits those decisions to Council for an
24	ultimate final decision by all council.
25	LIZ McLELLAN: In terms of the Finance

1 and Economic Development Committee, which its 2 acronym for which is FEDCO, you mentioned 3 councillors are able to sit in. 4 Did you sit in on FEDCO meetings? 5 STEPHEN BLAIS: When I was not a member 6 of FEDCO, I don't recall. But I imagine that I 7 did, but I can't recall specifics. 8 LIZ McLELLAN: So were you a member of 9 FEDCO then? 10 STEPHEN BLAIS: Every time I was a 11 Chair of a committee, I was a member of FEDCO, yes. 12 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. So were there 13 other standing committees that did work that was 14 related to Stage 1 of the LRT? 15 STEPHEN BLAIS: I believe there were --16 we updated our Transportation Master Plan in, I 17 think we voted on it in 2014, because that was the 18 plan that allowed us to do Stage 2. 19 So the consultations for that plan 20 would have taken place, I imagine, through 2013 and 21 likely 2012. So, obviously, there was a fair 22 degree of interaction between a Master 23 Transportation Plan for the entire city, and what 24 was happening vis-à-vis light rail. 25 So I'm sure that the Transportation

1 Committee had discussions about how light rail 2 would impact the need for, you know, roads, transit 3 projects, the interaction with sidewalks, bike 4 lanes, and all the other aspects of a system. 5 At some point, the Auditor General was б asked to do a number of audits about the 7 Confederation Line program. And so those audits 8 would have been reported in to first the Audit 9 Subcommittee, by process. 10 As I mentioned, the Transit Commission 11 was working on modifying the system to interact 12 with light rail. The Planning Committee would have 13 had some involvement, because there was an exercise 14 to look at how we could do intensification and 15 mixed use planning through the transit corridor of 16 light rail. And so there would have been 17 conversations around -- there was one station 18 downtown where the station was going to be built 19 into the podium of a building. And so I don't know 20 for a fact, but I imagine there were conversations 21 within the planning department about how that would 22 function at a planning level. 23 And, obviously, there was reviews of --

²³ there was the review around Blair station for mixed ²⁵ use, and there was reviews around other transit

1 stations for mixed use that would have been at the 2 Planning Committee. And so light rail as the major 3 project in the City, both at the time and 4 historically since Confederation, was dominating 5 much of City work. And aspects that touched onto 6 light rail, were touching almost every other 7 subcommittee, or the work of almost every other 8 standing committee and subcommittee. 9 LIZ MCLELLAN: And in terms of the 10 O-train construction office, what was that office's 11 role and responsibility? 12 STEPHEN BLAIS: So as I understand it. 13 they were the office that was responsible for the 14 day-to-day activities of -- in the beginning, 15 managing the procurement process, managing the 16 public meetings that were happening about it, and 17 all of the elements that went into that. That was 18 John -- he went to Metrolinx, I can't remember his 19 last name -- he was the head of that office for 20 sometime, and reported to Nancy Schepers, who was 21 the Deputy City Manager responsible. 22 What about the Rail LIZ MCLELLAN: 23 Implementation Office? 24 STEPHEN BLAIS: So the Rail 25 Implementation Office was established, as I

1 remember it, to implement light rail. It was 2 either established as part of the procurement 3 process, or right after the procurement process. 4 And they were to work hand-in-hand with the 5 proponent to ensure that -- well, through the 6 contractual process, and then through the 7 construction process. 8 And was there any LIZ MCLELLAN: 9 relationship between the O-train Construction 10 Office and the Rail Implementation Office? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: I believe there must 12 have been, I don't remember the specifics, though. 13 But it seems to me that there would have been. 14 LIZ MCLELLAN: What was your general 15 view on the updates on the LRT that Council 16 received, how frequent were they, the adequacy? 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: That's a tough 18 You know, I think once we were informed question. 19 that the original rail service availability date 20 would be missed, that May 2018 would be missed, I 21 feel that there were quite a few reports to Council 22 after that point. I don't recall how many reports 23 to Council were made about progress leading into 24 that. So it's hard for me to remember the 25 specifics.

1 I had an opportunity to work rather 2 closely with John Manconi at the time, and so it's 3 sometimes difficult for me to separate what I knew 4 because of just conversations versus what was being 5 presented to Council as a whole. 6 LIZ McLELLAN: What about the frequency 7 of your discussions with John Manconi? Were they 8 about how often would you like to be speaking to 9 him? Did you feel that you weren't receiving a lot 10 of updates? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: I was the Chair of the 12 Transit Commission, so I could speak to John 13 whenever I wanted to really. 14 LIZ McLELLAN: Okay. And then so in 15 terms of procurement, and the selection of the 16 DBFM model, what do you recall about that process? 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, I recall that 18 there were two separate votes, if I recall 19 correctly, or two separate reports. 20 There was the original report which 21 recommended design-build-maintain, and then I believe it had a caveat of, the City was actively 22 23 still exploring options to guarantee price and 24 avoid risks, etcetera. And then at some point 25 after that, we added the finance element of the

1 procurement process. 2 LIZ MCLELLAN: And did you have any 3 concerns about the risks associated with the 4 design-build-finance-maintain or DBFM model? 5 STEPHEN BLAIS: I had the same level of б risk that I generally have as a decisionmaker about 7 going into any project in trying to balance the 8 potential risks with the benefits that it provides 9 to the public and to the City as a whole. 10 The way that the contract and the 11 process was described to us, from either City Staff 12 or the Council that was advising us at the time, 13 led me to have a degree of confidence that the City 14 was protector, taxpayers were protected from a cost 15 overrun perspective. And given the long history of 16 light rail, as I mentioned going back to 2003, 2004 17 and kind of the escalating costs that were involved 18 and discussions around it, that gave me a degree of 19 confidence enough to be able to support the 20 program. 21 You mentioned risks and LIZ MCLELLAN: 22 benefits. Can you provide background on what you 23 believe the risks versus the benefits were on the 24 DBFM model? 25 Well, I'm not sure if STEPHEN BLAIS:

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it's related to the model. But the risks of the 1 2 program were that the costs would escalate 3 astronomically, you know, going back to 2004, it 4 was on \$1.2 billion, and now we were at 2.1, after 5 having just brought it back down from 2.5 or 2.6. 6 So there had been a great deal of 7 public energy and public discussions about the cost 8 of light rail, and whether or not that was 9 something that the City of Ottawa was really able 10 to afford. And so the risk, from my perspective 11 Could it be delivered for 2.1 or thereabouts? was: 12 And how would that, you know, impact taxes, and 13 voter and constituent perception? How would it 14 affect ridership? And, would it consume all 15 available funds that might otherwise be spent on 16 other projects, etcetera. 17 The benefit of rail was that we would 18 have, if the project was not going to stop at 19 simply Stage 1, which I mentioned is already a 20 concern of mine. If it was truly going to be a 21 city building project, then it would have the 22 opportunity to connect the entire city with a

modern electric, which is more sustainable, public
 transit system.

And so because of the contractual model

that was presented by Staff to Council, as well as the work that had progressed, including Staff support and a Council resolution, to review on an expedited basis accelerating rail construction to Orléans, those things alleviated my most serious concerns about the program, and allowed me to vote for it.

8 LIZ MCLELLAN: In 2011, FEDCO directed 9 Staff to look at accelerating the schedule of the 10 LRT. Do you recall the circumstances around that 11 direction from FEDCO?

STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall all the circumstances. I know there was a desire to see if it could be opened for 2017, which was the Sesquicentennial of Canada, but other than that, I don't recall all the specifics.

¹⁷ But my recollection is that there was a ¹⁸ desire to have it opened for the 2017 celebrations, ¹⁹ if possible.

20 LIZ McLELLAN: Do you know where that 21 direction came from?

STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, certainly the
 Mayor had been talking about Sesquicentennial
 celebrations, I believe it was part of his election
 platform, but that's what I know.

1 Generally, what type of LIZ MCLELLAN: 2 direction came from either FEDCO or the Mayor on 3 accelerating the schedule? 4 STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall -- I 5 don't recall specifics to tell you the truth. Ι б was non-FEDCO at the time, so I just remember the 7 politics. 8 LIZ MCLELLAN: You don't recall the 9 Mayor speaking about wanting to have the project 10 done sooner than was initially anticipated? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I mentioned, the 12 Mayor was a proponent of Ottawa celebrating 13 Sesquicentennial, he campaigned on it in the 2010 14 election, and was certainly a champion of it from a 15 tourism and economic development perspective. 16 I believe there was a desire to get the 17 train open and ready for that celebration in the 18 summer of 2017. Other than that, I don't recall 19 any specifics as to why they accelerated other than 20 that. 21 LIZ MCLELLAN: You were on FEDCO when 22 Mayor Watson would have been the Chair, I assume. 23 STEPHEN BLAIS: For part of -- Mayor 24 Watson was the Chair his entire tenure. I was on 25 FEDCO from December 2014 onwards.

1 LIZ MCLELLAN: In terms of deliberations in FEDCO, as Chair, would Mayor 2 3 Watson take the lead and then there was 4 discussions? Or how would deliberations shake-out 5 on FEDCO? 6 Generally speaking, the STEPHEN BLAIS: 7 Mayor is the Chair of the Committee. So generally 8 speaking, the Chair is pretty benign. The Chair 9 recognizes people to speak, introduces the Staff 10 who are making a presentation. 11 If there are delegates, calls their 12 names so they can speak; will let them know how 13 much time they have left when they're getting close 14 to their allotted time. And generally moderates 15 the debate or the discussion afterwards with his --16 there's always a committee clerk that is assisting 17 the Chair of all committees. 18 And then, obviously, as an elected 19 official, he or she has the opportunity to then 20 also ask Staff questions, they vote. They 21 generally referee the order of -- if there are 22 motions to amend the Staff report, they generally 23 referee the order in which those motions are voted 24 on, because the order can sometimes dictate if a 25 second motion is needed or not, you know, depending

1	how the first motion might change the report. And
2	so the Chair acts as the referee of the meeting,
3	effectively.
4	LIZ McLELLAN: And generally during
5	your time on Council, if there were certain
6	campaign promises in municipal elections, was there
7	a particular focus in Committees or on Council on
8	fulfilling those promises?
9	STEPHEN BLAIS: I would think that any
10	elected official is committed to fulfilling their
11	promises. I think that's the nature of being an
12	elected official.
13	LIZ McLELLAN: What about with respect
14	to the OLRT?
15	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, as I recall, the
16	Mayor's commitment on light rail during the 2010
17	campaign, was that he was committed to it if it
18	achieved \$2.1 billion. I don't recall other
19	commitments he may have made about light rail
20	during that campaign.
21	As I said before, in my campaign and
22	previous, I was concerned about the train price, as
23	well as the fact that it was not coming to Orléans.
24	And so I was preoccupied with addressing those
25	particular elements of my concern, which I believe

1 I was successful in doing. 2 LIZ McLELLAN: Do you recall how the 3 final cost decision on the LRT shook out? 4 STEPHEN BLAIS: What do you mean? 5 LIZ MCLELLAN: Do you recall how the 6 final cost of the LRT, that number was arrived at? 7 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, Larry 8 O'Brien had promised that the train would be 9 \$2.1 billion. At some point between 2006 and 2010 10 when he presented this version of the plan. 11 It was revealed at some point, either 12 during the election or shortly thereafter, that 13 that was a snapshot in time estimate, and it was 14 not factoring in construction, inflation, the fact 15 that it wouldn't be built -- you know, that there 16 is a planning process and it's actually built, 17 three, four, five years after actually he started 18 talking about it. 19 So the net present value of the -- or 20 the estimated net present value of the contract was 21 going to be closer to 2.5 or 2.6 billion dollars in 22 terms of real cash. And so an exercise was 23 undertaken to see if \$2.1 billion could be 24 achieved. 25 That exercise produced the plan that

1	went to market, and the bids came in at the various
2	prices that they came in at, and Council evaluated
3	based on Staff advice, the successful proponent,
4	and their bid, and what they said would be the cost
5	as part of their bid.
6	LIZ MCLELLAN: Do you recall the
7	circumstances around the December 2012 report that
8	went to Council that had a final cost projection of
9	\$2.13 billion?
10	STEPHEN BLAIS: Circumstances, no.
11	LIZ MCLELLAN: Do you recall that that
12	was sort of the final number, that it went from 2.1
13	to 2.13?
14	STEPHEN BLAIS: 2.1 and change, sorry.
15	\$30 million in a \$2 billion project is a rounding
16	error.
17	LIZ MCLELLAN: Right. So back to
18	procurement.
19	What was your understanding about the
20	City's selection of the vehicles?
21	STEPHEN BLAIS: As I recall, there were
22	three consortia that formed to do a request for
23	qualification. Or there may have been more than
24	three that formed, but the three were qualified to
25	proceed through the procurement process. And each

1 one of the consortia had a different vehicle 2 provider, if I recall correctly. I believe it was 3 Alstom in one, Siemens in another, and Bombardier 4 in a third, I could be mistaken there. And 5 ultimately we were deciding on a complete package 6 of the consortia, as I recall. 7 LIZ McLELLAN: Was there any preference 8 towards one specific vehicle provider? 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, certainly there 10 was a great deal of conversation in trying to build 11 Canadian, which of course was Bombardier at the 12 time. 13 And so in fairness, I think there was a 14 lot of public pressure to choose Bombardier as the 15 vehicle provider. And certainly I think there was 16 a fair bit of criticism after the selection that 17 Bombardier was not the vehicle supplier because 18 they were a Canadian firm. 19 LIZ MCLELLAN: And do you have any 20 knowledge about the circumstances around the 21 selection of the Alstom Citadis Spirit for Stage 1? 22 STEPHEN BLAIS: No. Just that it was 23 recommended by our Staff and it was part of the 24 package of the recommendation. 25 LIZ McLELLAN: Generally, what were the

1 specifications that Council thought that they were 2 getting with the Alstom Citadis Spirit vehicle? 3 Were there certain benefits in the selection of 4 that vehicle? 5 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, as I recall, it 6 was modular, and so there are two vehicles that 7 form one train. 8 The vehicles are also adaptable, so 9 that there is an extra section that can be -- the 10 vehicle can essentially be sawed in half, and a new 11 model could be put into the vehicle to allow the 12 vehicle to grow as our system grows while 13 maintaining the same vehicle. 14 There were, I believe two or three 15 different nose options to the vehicle that each had 16 their own kind of benefits that were going to be 17 part of the evaluation process. 18 The trains can be run as single vehicle 19 trains, or double vehicle trains. And it's been 20 mentioned that would allow the system to grow, 21 which because of the stations within tunnels, that 22 was particularly important, so that we wouldn't 23 have to -- future system growth would not require 24 additional tunnel excavation or tunnel platform 25 additions, those could be sized to the ultimate

1 length of the vehicles. 2 They were electric, which was obviously 3 a important consideration from our environmental 4 perspective. Those are the main points about the 5 vehicle that I recall. 6 Do you have any view on LIZ MCLELLAN: 7 the vehicle and how it functioned sitting here 8 today? 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, there's certainly 10 been some challenges with the vehicle at the 11 I rode the train last week, it arrives on launch. 12 time and got me to my destination on time 13 relatively comfortably. But certainly there were 14 challenges at the launch of the system to be sure. 15 LIZ MCLELLAN: And what types of 16 challenges were there? 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, there were issues 18 with the sensors on the doors, and so the doors 19 have a sensor in them so that if -- mostly if 20 you're exiting the train, but in both entering and 21 exiting the train, if you've got a backpack string, 22 or a loose shirt, or a dress, the doors have a 23 sensor so that you don't get caught in the train 24 and get pulled behind the train. 25 So as I understand it, the sensor on

1 those doors was perhaps too sensitive, and so 2 you're getting door faults, the trains can't 3 operate with the doors open, so that was leading to 4 trains being stalled on the platform and ultimately 5 delays. 6 There were instances where customers, 7 in an attempt to be polite and allow people to 8 enter or exit the train, customers were using a bit 9 too much force in trying to get the train door to 10 stay open, and that was causing problems with the 11 mechanics of how the door operated. 12 That sensor, you just have to put your 13 hand there and it would keep the door open, but 14 some people were using physical force and that was 15 breaking elements or breaking the sensors on the 16 elements of the doors. 17 This wasn't a vehicle issue, but there 18 was an issue with how the track switches were being 19 heated, and this was causing ice jams, as I recall, 20 as the winter approached. 21 And there were, again, not specific to

And there were, again, not specific to the vehicles necessarily, but I think people's perceptions tied it to the vehicles, because of the way the buses were arriving at the service, and I think probably because of some of the delays to the

1 trains, for those other reasons I was talking 2 about, many of the vehicles were overcrowded or 3 felt to be overcrowded. This is in part 4 perceptual, and part real. 5 The trains were always designed to have 6 roughly 60 percent of the occupants standing, which 7 I'm not sure was properly communicated during the 8 lead-up exercise, but certainly there were also 9 some very full trains because of challenges that 10 the system was having just getting people to the 11 platforms and getting the timing right. 12 And, obviously, the train issues were 13 creating other backlogs in the system that was, you 14 know, just compounding problems. 15 Ms. Young -- sorry, go LIZ MCLELLAN: 16 ahead. 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sorry. There was a lot 18 of issues as you can imagine, I likely don't 19 remember all of them. 20 I remember there being some kind of 21 electrical arcing problem between the catenary and 22 the top of the vehicle, so there was some burnout I 23 think in the catenaries. I believe as a result, 24 one of the catenaries might have come down as well, 25 or would've been misaligned at some point.

1	And there were also issues with the
2	train control system, in how the vehicles were
3	communicating with each other. And that ultimately
4	led to issues with how the system communicates with
5	the track switches and the other technology that
6	helps control the system and make it safe.
7	EMILY YOUNG: When those issues were
8	arriving, Mr. Blais, would those be the type of
9	things that would come to the Transit Commission as
10	in charge of overseeing OC Transpo?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: At that point they
12	should have, yes, because the train was in
13	operation. I wasn't the Chair of the Committee at
14	that point, but I believe those issues were going
15	to Transit Commission at that point, yeah. I
16	think, that's my recollection.
17	EMILY YOUNG: And in your view, did the
18	Transit Commission respond appropriately to those
19	issues?
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, there was a
21	I'm not sure if there was a special meeting of the
22	Transit Commission, or if it ended up being a joint
23	meeting or full meeting of Council. But we
24	definitely had, at the time again, I don't
25	recall if it was called an emergency meeting, but

1	it felt like it was an emergency meeting, in the
2	Council Chambers to bring in the various members of
3	RTG. And I believe some experts from England were
4	there as well that they had brought in to evaluate
5	some of the challenges.
6	This was a public meeting, and so there
7	was definitely a very kind of public airing of
8	grievances and exercise to try to better understand
9	the various technical issues that were happening to
10	cause the problems, you know, understanding the
11	City Councillors are not engineers, or lawyers, or
12	otherwise technical experts, trying to get an
13	understanding of: Did the people running the
14	system know what the problems were? Did they know
15	what was causing the problems? And did they have a
16	plan of action to address the problems? If the
17	answer to those questions was, "yes", you know,
18	what was it?
19	LIZ McLELLAN: Did you feel the answers
20	were sufficient?

STEPHEN BLAIS: Some of the answers. I recall a particular line of questioning from me, I was asking about the track switches and whether or not the expert from RTM or RTG thought that the electric track switches were the cause of the

1 issue. 2 He was not committal on that. And I 3 believe -- I stand to be corrected, this is all a 4 matter of public record so you can review it. Ι 5 believe the expert from England thought it was too 6 early to decide as well. 7 I then proceeded to ask Troy Charter, 8 who worked for OC Transpo, if we had had similar 9 issues on the north-south diesel train. He said, 10 "no." I asked, "why?" He said, "we use gas 11 heaters." And so I, you know, dot to dot, "why not 12 just put gas heaters on the electric train?" 13 And at the time, the folks from RTM, 14 and I believe the experts from England hedged on 15 that. But I believe ultimately that was the 16 solution, was that they installed gas heaters, if I 17 recall correctly. And I believe that has proven 18 itself to be the ultimate fix to that particular 19 problem. 20 And so there is definitely a fair 21 degree of hedging -- and I guess "hedging" is the 22 right word -- from RTG or RTM about the various 23 issues. They definitely didn't want to commit 24 publicly to any strong definitions of what the 25 problems were.

1	LIZ McLELLAN: How did you get that
2	sense that that was the case?
3	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, that particular
4	example, as one example, and it was just a feeling
5	that you got through the process, that they
б	were they did not want to commit publicly to
7	what the problems were.
8	My sense was, because they understood
9	that if the problems were their fault, it would be
10	contractual and commercially they would be
11	commercially responsible for it. And so they were
12	trying to, you know, hedge to protect their
13	liability. That was the feeling that I had as a
14	participant in the meeting.
15	LIZ McLELLAN: Sorry, Ms. Young, I cut
16	in on your questions.
17	EMILY YOUNG: Not at all, those are
18	definitely followups I would have asked anyway.
19	Do you feel like the public benefited
20	from those sessions, as well, Mr. Blais?
21	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, it depends how
22	you define "public benefits."
23	The public had an opportunity to see
24	their elected officials frustrated and upset, and
25	questioning various experts and Staff. And so from

1	that perspective, the public benefited from their
2	elected officials representing them to the various
3	individuals and groups involved.
4	Ultimately, many of the issues that
5	were happening with the train at that time, and
6	that were discussed at that meeting, I believe the
7	majority, if not all those issues, have been
8	resolved. So in the grand scheme, the public
9	benefits with the train that's working properly as
10	it's designed to do.
11	LIZ McLELLAN: Any further questions,
12	Ms. Young?
13	So Mr. Blais, it's up to you, but right
14	now is a good time to take a break in terms of
15	where I'm going with my questioning. So how is a
16	ten-minute break now? Or would you rather wait
17	until 10:30, it's up to you.
18	STEPHEN BLAIS: No, now is fine.
19	LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. So we'll come
20	back at 10:30 then.
21	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. Sounds good.
22	LIZ MCLELLAN: Mr. Wardle, does that
23	work for you?
24	PETER WARDLE: Are you anticipating
25	you're going to finish before 12?
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1	STEPHEN BLAIS: I think so, yes.
2	PETER WARDLE: Just because I have
3	another commitment at 12, it's just a selfish
4	request.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: We will try our very
6	best. I'll keep an eye on time, we will try.
7	PETER WARDLE: Thank you.
8	RECESS TAKEN AT 10:19
9	UPON RESUMING AT 10:31
10	LIZ McLELLAN: So, Mr. Blais, before
11	our break you referred to a public meeting where
12	some of the issues with the LRT were discussed with
13	RTG, I believe.
14	Can you please provide some information
15	on the date that that occurred; that meeting?
16	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yeah, I don't recall
17	the exact date, but I believe it would have been in
18	either December of 2019 or January of 2020, because
19	the system was in service. It was definitely
20	winter time because we were talking about ice jams
21	on the track switches.
22	And I stopped participating largely in
23	Council meetings once the writ for my by-election
24	began, which was towards the end of January so
25	that's why I think it would have been January. It

1 could have been February, but that's my 2 recollection. 3 LIZ McLELLAN: And then turning to 4 construction, what was the City's role, City 5 Council's role during construction? 6 STEPHEN BLAIS: During construction, 7 City Council had no role. Formally it was the 8 construction project was owned by RTG. They were 9 fully responsible for it. 10 The rail office was, you know, keeping 11 track of things on, you know, based on the 12 provisions of the contract. But otherwise City 13 Council had made a purchase and we were waiting 14 delivery. 15 LIZ MCLELLAN: And in terms of 16 information updates during the construction 17 process, would you say they were regular, they were 18 adequate? How often was Council briefed? 19 STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall the 20 regularity of them. We got updates when they were 21 significant construction incidents; there were 22 updates to Council about those. 23 Occasionally there would be a media 24 story that would drive a councillor inquiry into 25 So there would have been a response construction.

1 to those inquiries. 2 And then as I said before, once we 3 received the news that the original RSA would not 4 be met, there were far more frequent updates. Ι 5 believe those updates generally went to the finance 6 committee and not to Council. 7 But the updates took on an new pace and 8 higher degree of public importance once we knew the 9 RSA wasn't going to be met. 10 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. So turning to 11 FEDCO, I assume you were on FEDCO for most if not 12 all of construction. What types of updates did you 13 receive at FEDCO? 14 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, I don't 15 recall the specifics. At FEDCO generally we 16 received just very kind of high level status 17 updates, as I recall. 18 I believe we probably got a finance 19 update when various milestones of the contract were 20 hit and those milestones led to large sums being 21 released to pay the proponents. 22 In the time before RSA was achieved, I 23 don't recall many construction updates. There may 24 have been some, but I don't recall them. 25 Often the updates were related to the

1 communications program that was going to happen --2 sorry, I may be confusing Transit Commission, but 3 there were certainly updates about how the 4 communications rollout for light rail would happen, 5 the communications rollout for the transition of 6 the bus routing system. 7 As I said, I believe there were updates 8 to the committee when there were certain 9 construction incidents and when major milestones 10 were achieved and as a result, payments were being 11 made. 12 LTZ MCLELLAN: As far as the 13 communication planning, I assume you're getting 14 briefings from City Staff on that. They're 15 identifying issues; you're probably receiving key 16 What were the main issues that were messages. 17 identified in the communications plan rollout? 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: There were several 19 different communications plans. So if you can be 20 more specific? 21 LIZ MCLELLAN: Specifically the 22 communication plan that FEDCO would receive, let's 23 say I quess you wouldn't have -- well, you would 24 have been there when the line was in passenger 25 service.

1	But just generally, the different
2	discussions that would happen around communications
3	plans specifically RSA dates, missed RSA dates,
4	delays, that kind of thing?
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. So
6	communications plans around RSA dates and missed
7	RSA dates, I don't believe were publicly presented
8	to FEDCO. They were, I think internal
9	communications, plans, if they were in fact
10	officially plans.
11	Any communications to FEDCO would have
12	been kind of very factual. All FEDCO meetings are
13	public. It would have been here is the date, here
14	is the timeline, here is what we know, etcetera.
15	Communications plans that I was
16	referring to in my earlier comment were more around
17	the communications and marketing plans, as an
18	example, for the route changes, and how we ensured
19	that customers knew about the route changes because
20	they were significant and aggressive changes that
21	would lead to broad-based confusion if they weren't
22	communicated properly. So what is the
23	communications plan for that?
24	What is the communications plan leading
25	up to the delivery of light rail, and so are we

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	going to communicate every milestone, or certain
	milestones? You know, about what revealing the
	vehicle? How are we going to show people what the
	vehicle looks like?
	We had the demonstration model at
	Landsdowne Park for a bit as an example. You know,
.	here are the kind of key dates when the various
	elements of the communications plan might be put
	into place. Here is the recommendation for a
1	budget for the communications plan, things such as
1	that.
1	In fairness, some of that may have been
1	in private briefings and some may have been in open
14	session. I don't recall the separation there.
1!	COURT TECHNICIAN: Sorry to interrupt,
1	I just noticed the court reporter's video had
1'	signed off. I just want to confirm that she's
18	still able to hear.
19	LIZ McLELLAN: Let's go off the record,
2	please.
2	OFF THE RECORD DISCUSSION
2	LIZ McLELLAN: Mr. Blais, would the
2	City's internal advisors and Staff advise the
2	communications plan, or was there a third party
2!	engaged to do that work?
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1	STEPHEN BLAIS: In fairness, I don't
2	recall. Certainly it was presented to me by Staff.
3	There was definitely a marketing or advertising
4	firm that was hired, gray hair, I can't remember
5	his name.
6	But he did a lot of work for the City,
7	so I don't know if he designed the plan or if he
8	just implemented the plan that was designed by
9	bureaucrats. I'm not sure.
10	LIZ McLELLAN: What was the Transit
11	Commission's role during construction?
12	STEPHEN BLAIS: The Transit
13	Commission's role was to get ready for the
14	transition to light rail. So as I discussed
15	earlier, we adjusted the route network to integrate
16	with light rail, we adjusted the fare table and
17	fare policies to eliminate the express fare for
18	similar riders to integrate with light rail.
19	We worked with the, I believe we had
20	the payment gate system, I believe came to the
21	Transit Commission if I recall, so the integration
22	of the payment gate system with the province's
23	Presto card network to ensure that was working
24	properly and fully integrated.
25	And as I mentioned, OC Transpo did a

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2	discussions with the various stakeholders, riders,
3	Staff, mechanics, bus drivers, etcetera, to
4	understand kind of the whole journey of what needed
5	to happen to prepare for and ultimately be in
6	charge of operating the multimodal system.
7	LIZ MCLELLAN: In terms of the
8	information that the Transit Commission received,
9	on the construction process, did you feel it was
10	satisfactory?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: In fairness, I don't
12	recall if there were any construction updates to
13	the Transit Commission because it did not have
14	carriage of the file from a construction
15	perspective. I believe that most if not all
16	updates went to either FEDCO or Council directly.
17	But all members of the all elected
18	members of the commission are of course members of
19	City Council and all Council members can attend.
20	LIZ McLELLAN: You were on FEDCO at the
21	time, so how did you feel of the sufficiency of
22	updates to FEDCO on the construction process?
23	STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, it's very
24	difficult for me to make that assessment, because I
25	was privy to a fair bit of information outside of
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1 FEDCO because of my interactions with John and the 2 team on a pretty regular basis. So it's hard for 3 me to separate what I knew from what instance. 4 I felt like I had a -- at points, and 5 most points, I felt like I had a pretty fair 6 understanding of what was happening. There were 7 other times when perhaps not. 8 So it's difficult for me to be precise 9 about the presentations of FEDCO, I quess is what 10 I'm getting at. 11 And how did you feel or LIZ MCLELLAN: 12 what was your perception of the City's role in 13 construction with respect to the level of 14 involvement that the City had, keeping in mind 15 obviously that that was sort of RTG's wheelhouse? 16 But did you feel that the City was 17 involved as much as they could be? Did they take a 18 back seat, as sort of in the client role? What did 19 you feel about the involvement? 20 The City definitely STEPHEN BLAIS: 21 took a client relationship, and often when members 22 of Council would question being more involved, we 23 were told on a number of occasions that if we were 24 to increase our level of involvement, or if we were 25 to provide, you know, direction X or direction A we

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1	would take on more risk and we would risk
2	We, the City would risk not benefiting
3	from the risk avoidance that is built into the
4	contract, that we would take on more and more
5	ownership of it, and the risk avoidances built into
6	the contract would be nullified.
7	LIZ McLELLAN: Who told you that?
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: Staff in answering
9	questions.
10	LIZ McLELLAN: Which City Staff
11	members?
12	STEPHEN BLAIS: I can't recall the
13	specifics. Most of the meetings, there was a
14	plethora of City Staff available to answer our
15	questions.
16	LIZ McLELLAN: And do you remember,
17	were you told that in terms of in Council briefings
18	and FEDCO briefings and meetings? When were you
19	told to not get involved so as to not take on more
20	risk?
21	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yeah. So I don't think
22	we were told not to get involved. I think we were
23	advised that the more involved or the more we tried
24	to micromanage the project, the more risk we would
25	absorb.

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1	Staff don't tell us what to do. They
2	just give advice as, you know, their best advice.
3	I believe that that likely happened in
4	both private briefings and in open session. But
5	certainly that was the culture of the program for
6	the entirety of the program.
7	If the more Council tried to or wanted
8	to micromanage various aspects of things, the more
9	risk we would absolve the proponent of and absorb
10	ourselves for taxpayers.
11	LIZ McLELLAN: What were other aspects
12	of the culture during the period of Stage 1?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: Can you be more
14	specific?
15	LIZ MCLELLAN: Well, you reference the
16	fact that more involvement equals potentially
17	absorbing more risk. What were other aspects that
18	you understood at the time that governed council's
19	role and reactions to the construction process?
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: In fairness, I don't
21	know how to really answer that question. I don't
22	maybe understand what you're asking.
23	LIZ McLELLAN: If you understood at the
24	time that you were trying to avoid taking on more
25	risk, because that was something that would lead to

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1	the City absorbing more risk or potentially taking
2	on more risk, what were some other things that you
3	knew to be true at the time?
4	STEPHEN BLAIS: I knew that light rail
5	would be a transformational project for our city; I
6	know it was exceedingly expensive and so there was
7	a fair degree of concern about the price, and
8	ensuring that the contract was delivered based on
9	the RSA and the contracted price.
10	It had been communicated to the public
11	as a fixed price, fixed day contract, and so there
12	was a degree of focus on those aspects.
13	And, you know, from my perspective,
14	that we weren't stopping here, that there was going
15	to be more that needed to be done. And the
16	planning for the eventual expansion of the system
17	was critical to the success of the first aspects of
18	the system, which are commonly referred to as the
19	Confederation Line.
20	LIZ McLELLAN: As a member of FEDCO,
21	and I understand you were frequently briefed by the
22	City treasurer, were you aware of any measures that
23	took place to constrain costs and ensure that the
24	City was staying within the \$2.13 billion budget?
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: The entire tunnel

1	alignment was changed pre-procurement. And so the
2	tunnel was originally somewhere between 10 and
3	14 storeys deep, if I recall. It ended up being 3
4	to 4 storeys deep as a result of the alignment
5	change.
6	It was kind of diagonal through the
7	downtown. The tunnel largely runs under Queen
8	Street, if I recall correctly. So those changes
9	were made to constrain costs.
10	Were there other constraint elements?
11	I don't recall, likely there were, others were done
12	pre-procurement as part of that exercise I spoke to
13	you about earlier.
14	LIZ McLELLAN: What City consultants
15	did you understand to be active during the time of
16	construction?
17	STEPHEN BLAIS: On light rail?
18	LIZ McLELLAN: Yes.
19	STEPHEN BLAIS: Boxfish Group was
20	working on it. As I said, there was that marketing
21	firm, if you said the name out loud I could confirm
22	it. I don't remember it's on the tip of my
23	tongue, the chap has grey hair, I just can't
24	remember his name.
25	They were doing the marketing and
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1	advertising aspects of the rollout. We had our
2	legal counsel, outside legal counsel advising us on
3	a procurement and once the RSA was missed or
4	perhaps before the RSA was missed, either the rail
5	office or The City Manager's office brought in the
6	external consultants.
7	Again, I don't remember his name, but
8	he had worked on the New Jersey rail network, and
9	so he was brought in to advise us as to, you know,
10	provide outside advice on the information we were
11	receiving from RTG and give us his understanding of
12	its accuracy, and if they were overconfident and
13	things of that nature.
14	LIZ McLELLAN: And what was generally
15	communicated to you on that point, in this
16	gentleman's view?
17	STEPHEN BLAIS: In some cases they were
18	exactly where they were. In other cases he thought
19	they were perhaps slightly optimistic. And in
20	other cases, it would come down to the specific
21	elements of testing, or how the next aspects of the
22	process went, before he could provide a real good
23	judgment.
24	And he was giving us, you know, kind of
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²⁵ assessment of the information he had before him,

1 but also his expert advice and understanding of 2 generally speaking how certain things go, and what 3 we might expect, etcetera, as we kind of progressed 4 through the next steps. 5 LIZ MCLELLAN: And in your view, did 6 the City have the expertise it needed at the time 7 for the construction phase of the project? 8 STEPHEN BLAIS: No, definitely the City 9 did not have the internal expertise, which is why 10 through the rail office and through OC Transpo, and 11 eventually these consultants' expertise was brought 12 in. 13 Michael Morgan was brought in, into OC 14 Transpo. Originally he may have been with the rail 15 office, but he transitioned to OC Transpo to be the 16 head of rail. 17 We had this consultant, as I mentioned, 18 who had worked on the New Jersey system, because 19 Ottawa and OC Transpo in particular, had been a 20 single mode transit agency with buses, they're 21 experts in bus mechanics and bus networks, but 22 certainly did not have much if any rail expertise 23 internally. 24 Which City Staff and LIZ MCLELLAN:

²⁵ contractors were the key players during this phase?

1	The construction phase?
2	STEPHEN BLAIS: The entire program
3	or
4	LIZ McLELLAN: The construction phase.
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: So Kent Kirkpatrick
6	would have been City Manager when construction
7	began. Nancy Schepers would have been Deputy City
8	Manager. John Jennings, I think that's his name,
9	was the head of the rail office, so he was a key
10	player.
11	At some point Chris Swail came into the
12	picture. The Mayor's Staff were always involved in
13	briefings and meetings. As I mentioned, eventually
14	Michael Morgan was brought in.
15	John eventually got a promotion and was
16	no longer just the head of OC Transpo but general
17	manager of all transportation services, so he
18	eventually became much more involved in the
19	construction aspects of the program as well.
20	Anything that John was involved in,
21	Jocelyne Begin was involved in. I would say that
22	those are the key, the key Staff that I'm aware of.
23	LIZ McLELLAN: Who was involved from
24	the Mayor's Staff and what were their positions?
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: So Serge Arpin was

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1	certainly involved. He was the Mayor's chief of
2	Staff. Mathieu Gravel was in most meetings.
3	Mathieu, I don't know his formal title, but Mathieu
4	was a senior assistant in the Mayor's office.
5	Robyn Guest was often involved in
6	meetings, I don't remember if Robyn worked directly
7	in the Mayor's office or in The City Manager's
8	office but she was definitely in the executive
9	suites. The Mayor obviously. I believe that's
10	largely it.
11	LIZ McLELLAN: And so if the Mayor
12	couldn't attend meetings often, would his political
13	Staff attend the meetings on his behalf then?
14	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure, sure.
15	LIZ McLELLAN: And would have
16	substantive recommendations that they would put
17	forward?
18	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yeah, occasionally,
19	they would provide advice, you know, based on their
20	expertise.
21	LIZ McLELLAN: Did they provide
22	actually I'm okay on that point.
23	Okay, so in your view were there any
24	events or occurrences during the construction that
25	may have caused or contributed to the Stage 1 LRT

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1	breakdowns and derailments?
2	STEPHEN BLAIS: Breakdowns and
3	derailments? Well, certainly there were a number
4	of construction incidents during the construction
5	process, at least three that I can recall off the
6	top of my head.
7	I don't know if they're directly
8	related to the breakdowns or derailments
9	specifically. But there were three kind of bigger
10	events that took place.
11	LIZ McLELLAN: What were those three
12	events?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: There were two
14	sinkholes. There was one on Rideau Street, which
15	was what I call the big one. There had been one a
16	smaller one earlier over kind of in the Nicholas
17	side of the tunnel.
18	And when there was some kind of bridge
19	structure or off ramp that was being demolished as
20	part of the construction, it was being demolished
21	but it fell more suddenly than I think was supposed
22	to happen as part of the demolition.
23	And so that was a point of, you know,
24	alarm or alert, in that day for a day or two, just
25	in terms of, you know, workplace safety and things

1	of that nature.
2	LIZ McLELLAN: What was the City
3	response like when there were construction
4	incidents?
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: So I think it varied
6	based on the severity of the incident. When that
7	bridge structure collapsed, I think in the grand
8	scheme of things it was overall relatively minor
9	but in the moment it seemed like it might be
10	serious.
11	And so there was an escalation having a
12	debriefing and understanding what was going on, and
13	whether, you know, what the impacts might be,
14	etcetera.
15	When the first sinkhole happened, it
16	I don't really remember the specifics around that
17	to tell you the truth; that's the smaller one.
18	When the bigger one happened, I know it
19	was a major incident, the emergency operations
20	centre was brought up. I was asked to get to City
21	Hall immediately for a briefing on that, which
22	happened in the POC train construction office, or
23	the emergency operations centre.
24	And we were briefed. There was a media
25	conference immediately after the incident, if I

1	recall correctly.
2	RTG was scrambling to hire local
3	construction companies to figure out how to, if I
4	recall correctly, seal the water at first and then
5	fill the hole and make it stable first and then
6	proceed with trying to figure out exactly what
7	happened.
8	LIZ MCLELLAN: What was the
9	relationship like with the City and RTG during that
10	time?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: I can't comment on the
12	entire relationship between the City and RTG. But
13	as I understood, there was a close working
14	relationship between the two, like generally
15	speaking between the City and RTG.
16	But, you know, I didn't personally have
17	any interactions with RTG very often, so I can't
18	comment on more than just there was that client
19	relationship that you would have, same as if you
20	were building a house or some other personal
21	construction project.
22	LIZ McLELLAN: Do you recall when there
23	were concerns that were first raised about RTG's
24	performance?
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: Like construction

1 performance? 2 LIZ MCLELLAN: Yes. Or whenever you 3 first started to hear about you know some rumblings 4 about their performance, generally? 5 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure, yeah. 6 When was it? LIZ MCLELLAN: 7 STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't remember the 8 specific date or time, but there was a briefing --9 there was a briefing in the Mayor's boardroom with 10 myself and the Mayor and likely his Staff were 11 there. 12 Keith Egli, who was the Chair of the 13 Transportation Committee, was there and a number of 14 rail and OC Transpo employees were there. And they 15 gave us a chart basically of different milestones 16 that RTG needed to achieve in order to deliver on 17 time, with a description of, you know, with the 18 title of what the work was, a brief description of 19 what it was. 20 I think there was a column to why is 21 this important for a more layman understanding of 22 what we were talking about. Then there was a 23 colour coded system; green meant they were on 24 track; yellow meant that there might be some 25 slippage on it so it needed to be watched; and red

1	was, it was believed they were behind schedule on
2	those elements. And so we were briefed on that
3	package.
4	LIZ McLELLAN: And these briefings, was
5	there any direction that was given by political
6	staff to City staff or was it more informational?
7	STEPHEN BLAIS: I remember it to be
8	more informational, and question and answer.
9	LIZ McLELLAN: How was direction
10	communicated to City staff from either councillors,
11	the Mayor, and their political Staff; how was it
12	communicated to City staff?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, almost all
14	direction has to be done by committee or Council as
15	a whole. Certainly most or all substantial
16	direction needs to be given that way. And so in
17	almost all circumstances that's in public session.
18	Occasionally it can be done in private session in
19	camera, but there are strict rules in Ontario about
20	that?
21	For more minor kind of questions, it
22	would be, could be discussed in a briefing and
23	arrived at consensus, or directed there. And, you
24	know, occasionally, on OC Transpo matters, as an
25	example, John might give me a call or send me a

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1	text message saying what do you think about this or
2	that? And I would give him my answer.
3	And he would ultimately make the final
4	decision; he was asking me for just my point of
5	view.
6	I imagine others did that, or had that
7	kind of relationship depending on their time on
8	Council, etcetera.
9	LIZ McLELLAN: So were you, as the
10	Chair of the Transit Commission, able to make
11	substantive decisions that you would communicate to
12	John Manconi, sort of right away kind of thing?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: I wouldn't call them
14	substantive decisions, no.
15	I would ask, are we doing for
16	example, are we doing report A at the May meeting
17	versus the June meeting, and could we move it to
18	the June meeting instead or could we accelerate
19	this, that or the other thing.
20	Or I would prefer if, you know, if
21	there was a motion, as an example, that had been
22	adopted by the committee or by Council, preferences
23	in terms of timing in terms of when that might come
24	forward, or when we might do an announcement of it
25	and those kinds of things.

1 In terms of direct operations, John is 2 ultimately responsible for the direct operations of 3 OC Transpo, so I had no real authority to tell him 4 anything about how to operate the system because it 5 was his authority to do that. It was very surface б level, you know, cosmetic type of direction. 7 LIZ MCLELLAN: What was the process for 8 items arriving on committee agendas? 9 Well, generally there's STEPHEN BLAIS: 10 a work plan devised by the various departments 11 that's presented to their appropriate committee; I 12 believe it's annually. 13 And so the committee receives the work 14 plan from their departments, but Transit Commission 15 is only one department so it was relatively simple 16 process. And the staff then go about doing the 17 work on that work plan. 18 If other motions are approved by 19 committee or counsel in the interim then obviously 20 staff have to factor that into their work plan. Τf 21 there are federal or provincial announcements that 22 made changes, or you know, as an example, if 23 there's a federal infrastructure program that has a 24 quick deadline and we need to provide a list of 25 projects, that might change the work plan.

1 Ultimately, there is a meeting about a week or two before the committee agenda is made 2 3 public to review what items will be on the agenda. 4 What reports will be there, how 5 complete those reports are and whether they're 6 ready to actually be made public and go to 7 committee for conversation and decision. 8 The agenda is finalized and then a week 9 before the committee meeting, the agenda is made 10 public, and circulated. 11 Who has input into the LIZ MCLELLAN: 12 work plan? 13 STEPHEN BLAIS: All members of Council. 14 LIZ MCLELLAN: And are items ever removed from the agenda, like last minute, or does 15 16 the agenda typically, however it's arrived at, 17 that's how it goes to the committee meeting? 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: No, agenda items can 19 A report might not be ready for -- a change. 20 report might not be finished on time to be reviewed 21 before going on agenda. 22 So there had been experience in the 23 Council before I was elected where reports were 24 routinely removed because at the last minute it 25 wasn't ready or wasn't translated, or any number of

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1 reasons. 2 So at least when I was chair, I tried 3 to ensure that the report was ready and it was 4 actually done and the recommendation was clear 5 before we would put it on the agenda. 6 As I said, if some items might be 7 better to be talked about in April, or May or June, 8 the timing of it might be better either from a 9 political perspective or just from an operational 10 perspective. 11 Occasionally if an agenda was 12 particularly heavy and the meeting was anticipated 13 to go long, if there were less consequential items 14 those might be moved to the next meeting to deal 15 with the time management of the meeting. 16 LIZ MCLELLAN: What do you mean 17 "politically"? 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: The announcement about 19 the fare table change, should we make that in 20 January or should we make that in February? Right? 21 And so it's a political exercise; it is 22 a communications exercise. We need to ensure 23 people understand it. We need to ensure that 24 people have the opportunity to participate in the 25 We need to ensure that we're ready to process.

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1	communicate it properly.
2	So are we ready to do it in January or
3	should it be made in February instead? You know,
4	things of that nature.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: What information was
6	available to Council regarding the nature of the
7	winter testing conducted on the system?
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: I remember we were told
9	that the vehicles were tested by the National
10	Research Council. I remember that the vehicle was
11	used successfully or a model of the vehicle was
12	used successfully in Moscow, which is obviously a
13	cold weather climate.
14	And then those are the two kind of main
15	points about winter testing that I recall.
16	LIZ McLELLAN: What was the conclusion
17	of the National Research Council's assessment of
18	the vehicle?
19	STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall
20	specifically what they wrote. But I remember
21	generally the advice that we received from staff
22	was that the vehicle was capable of meeting our
23	needs for winter operations.
24	LIZ McLELLAN: When there were changes
25	to the construction schedule in substantial

1 completion or the RSA dates, who at the City was 2 involved in assessing those changes? 3 STEPHEN BLAIS: When you say "assessing", what do you mean? 4 5 LIZ MCLELLAN: Looking at the 6 circumstances around that change, determining sort 7 of what's next; determining how to interpret it 8 against the Project Agreement, that kind of thing. 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure. So the personnel 10 at the City changed throughout the construction 11 process, the leadership structure of the City 12 changed and so various players would have been 13 involved, I imagine, at various stages. 14 When RSA changed, as an example, there 15 was definitely a briefing with the group of people 16 I described earlier. 17 In terms of construction schedule 18 changes, I think it would depend on the nature of 19 the construction that was happening because 20 certainly there was a fair degree of interaction 21 with our transportation services department, as an 22 example, for traffic detours and things of that 23 nature. 24 And I would imagine a number of

²⁵ officials there were involved. But generally, it

1 was the leadership team in the rail office, the 2 City Manager's office and whatever interactions 3 with either OC Transpo or the transportation 4 department were needed, based on whatever 5 information was being provided. 6 LIZ MCLELLAN: And I understand that in 7 or about September 2018, RTG advised that it would 8 not be meeting the November 2nd, 2018, deadline. 9 Aspects of the Project Agreement were carved out; 10 do you recall the circumstances around that? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: Is this their second 12 missed or their third missed? 13 I believe that would be LIZ MCLELLAN: 14 their second missed. 15 STEPHEN BLAIS: They missed the RSA a 16 number of times. I don't recall the specifics 17 around the later RSA misses, other than generally 18 there was an internal view that they were overly 19 optimistic in all of their reschedulings after the 20 first RSA was missed, yeah. 21 LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of any 22 outstanding steps, decisions or directions from the 23 City regarding the construction of the system that 24 were not addressed? 25 STEPHEN BLAIS: That were not

1	addressed, or not addressed by the time of launch?
2	LIZ MCLELLAN: Both.
3	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, the system was
4	accepted without 17 vehicles, which as I understood
5	was always part of the plan. So the two the
6	four vehicles, two trains, I believe were missing
7	from the final acceptance.
8	And I believe that there were some
9	issues within some of the stations that still
10	needed to be worked out after acceptance. And
11	clearly, once the train was put into operation,
12	there were a number of deficiencies that were
13	identified that needed to be resolved.
14	I don't know the status of the
15	investigations that have taken place into the
16	various incidents that have happened so far and
17	where the investigations are and what outcomes and
18	what changes might need to be made as a result of
19	those.
20	But from my understanding, those are
21	still outstanding. And then obviously I've read
22	that the City and the RTG, RTM are in a legal
23	dispute about various aspects of the final process.
24	LIZ MCLELLAN: Are you aware of the
25	circumstances surrounding the manufacturing of the

1	trains?
2	STEPHEN BLAIS: Generally, sure, yeah.
3	LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of
4	anything that was outstanding? Are you aware of
5	any issues that arose with the manufacturing of the
6	trains?
7	STEPHEN BLAIS: I believe there were,
8	as I said, two vehicles that were poorly
9	manufactured and weren't ever going to be put into
10	service, which is part of the outstanding issues
11	that I just referenced.
12	The assembling of the trains took place
13	in Ottawa, so I believe at the very beginning at
14	least it was thought that was going slow, because
15	you had to recruit your staff, you had to train
16	them, you basically had an operation up and running
17	from scratch. And I know there was some discussion
18	around the impact that might have had on some of
19	the service reliability issues later.
20	And ultimately the decision was made
21	that we would buy the vehicles for Stage 2 early
22	and that those would be I don't recall where
23	they were being assembled, but they were not going
24	to be assembled in Ottawa.
25	LIZ MCLELLAN: So before I move over to

1 another area, Ms. Young, do you have any follow up 2 questions for Mr. Blais? 3 Yes, I wanted to follow EMILY YOUNG: 4 up on Mr. Blais's comments about certain 5 councillors apparently being interested in having 6 more involvement in the consortium phase of the 7 project. 8 You mentioned, in general, Council was 9 advised to take more of a back seat. The more you 10 get involved, the more risk you take on. 11 I was curious if you could tell us 12 whether you recall what those aspects of the 13 project were that certain councillors wanted to get 14 more involved in? 15 STEPHEN BLAIS: So at the beginning, 16 this was part of the defined process. There was a 17 Councillors Sponsors Group, I think that was the 18 formal name for it, that was put together to look 19 at things like, the material -- the kind of 20 interior look and design and feel of the vehicles. 21 I believe that after they made the 22 recommendations and those were accepted, there were 23 some things that popped up from time to time that 24 people wanted to, I'll use the word micromanage for 25 lack of a better term.

1 And so I believe we were told that the 2 minimum change order was a million dollars, as an 3 So obviously depending on the scope and example. 4 size of the change you wanted to make, you had to 5 take that into consideration that every change was б a million dollars. 7 And then I believe once it became clear 8 that -- or even before that, once there started to 9 be newspaper stories about on-site labour relations 10 issues, and workplace safety issues, and there was 11 some media coverage of that, I believe Council 12 wanted more specific information about those 13 things, but also to manage more explicitly those 14 factors or elements. 15 And, you know, those were clearly work 16 sites that were the responsibility of the vendor, 17 and so, you know, the answer to that we got was 18 about the risk and etcetera. 19 And then as we got closer to RSA or 20 even after we knew RSA was going to be missed, 21 that's when a lot of the conversation about, you 22 know, being more actively involved, you know, 23 taking over the project, replacing certain people 24 if necessary, etcetera, all kind of started to heat 25 up either formally or informally.

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1	Sometimes in the public domain,
2	sometimes just, you know, chat around the coffee
3	around the watercooler, that kind of thing, started
4	to pick up once we knew we were going to miss the
5	first RSA. I think we knew we were going to miss
6	the first RSA about a year, or eight months before,
7	something like that.
8	EMILY YOUNG: When those conversations
9	came up before the first RSA, did you continue to
10	receive the same advice from staff about staying
11	out of it so as not to take on more risk, or did
12	that start to change?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: No. The advice was
14	always, the more you get yourself directly
15	involved, the more risk you take on. With some of
16	the cosmetic changes, there was a functional
17	cosmetic change inside the vehicles relating to the
18	poles you hold, for example, for riders.
19	John made the decision to make that
20	change, despite the change order cost, because it
21	would be better for riders if there was extra
22	places to hold, as an example.
23	Some of those things were
24	councillors had other ideas for changes to the
25	internal of the vehicle that, you know, probably

1	would make the vehicle feel better but may not be
2	worth the million dollar it would cost them.
3	And then certainly as the various
4	issues arose either in delivery and then post
5	delivery, you know, conversations about, you know,
6	taking over or taking more aggressive direction and
7	steps etcetera, you know, kind of built up slowly
8	over time to eventual, I understand that City
9	Council had in-camera conversations about what to
10	do next.
11	EMILY YOUNG: And then following up,
12	you mentioned before that when RTG was providing
13	new RSA dates, you had certain consultants that
14	John Manconi had brought into give you advice on
15	the viability of those dates.
16	Would that have been consultants from
17	STV; do you recall?
18	STEPHEN BLAIS: It might be STV. I
19	remember the gentleman in particular. Bigger guy,
20	he's bald that's probably not flattering to him.
21	He worked on New Jersey train systems. And he was
22	kind of a constant fixture in our meetings. And
23	I'm sorry, I just don't recall his name.
24	EMILY YOUNG: That's okay. Might it
25	have been Tom Prendergast, or Larry Gaul, just to

1	bring up some STV names. They may not be the right
2	ones.
3	STEPHEN BLAIS: I could pick him out of
4	a lineup; I just don't know his name.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: Fair enough. I just
6	want to ask another question about the meetings
7	that you refer to where you were showed a chart
8	with the color coding green, yellow, red.
9	I was wondering if you could just
10	confirm what meeting that was; was that a formal
11	public meeting or was that some other private ad
12	hoc meeting?
13	STEPHEN BLAIS: It was an ad hoc
14	meeting; it was in the City Manager's boardroom, I
15	believe. I believe we had that meeting twice. And
16	it was myself and the Mayor, Keith Egli, was the
17	Chair of the Transportation Committee. I believe
18	the Mayor likely had political staff there.
19	I don't recall if Kent was still a City
20	Manager or if it had transitioned to Steve at that
21	point, but the City Manager would have been there.
22	The appropriate Deputy City Manager, I imagine
23	would have been there.
24	John, would have been there. As I said
25	any meeting John was in Jocelyne was in, so she

1 would have been there. 2 And there were likely more other on the 3 ground advisors, technical advisors, who were in 4 the meeting. Like I imagine Michael Morgan was 5 there, I don't -- but it was the typical gaggle of 6 people we would gather for expert conversation 7 about what was going on internally. 8 EMILY YOUNG: Do you recall when that 9 took place? 10 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, there were 11 They were both before RTG missed the first two. 12 RSA. But I don't recall the specific dates, no. 13 EMILY YOUNG: And you were in those 14 meetings. Was that in your capacity as Chair of 15 the Transit Commission? 16 STEPHEN BLAIS: I imagine. It was an 17 ad hoc meeting, so I was invited and I attended but 18 I presume it's because I was Chair of Transit. 19 That's all I have, Liz. EMILY YOUNG: 20 LIZ McLELLAN: Turning to the trial 21 running period in August 2019, what information was 22 available -- I quess at this time you're no longer 23 the Chair of the Transit Commission. 24 But you're on the Transportation 25 Committee and you're obviously a City Councillor,

1 so what information was available about the 2 approach taken and the standards required to be met 3 during trial running? 4 STEPHEN BLAIS: Do you mean 5 communicated by our staff, or in the media? What 6 do you mean? 7 Communicated by staff. LIZ MCLELLAN: 8 STEPHEN BLAIS: So as I recall, staff 9 told us that there needed to be 12 consecutive days 10 of successful trial running. I believe a day was 11 defined by a certain number of consecutive hours, 12 as I recall. 13 And it had to proceed at a certain 14 length of the system. I think there was a ramp up, 15 but I don't recall if that was part of the 12 days, 16 or if that was leading into the 12 days. But that 17 the 12 days of trial running was required before 18 you could have the conversation about acceptance. 19 LIZ MCLELLAN: And do you recall any 20 change in the requirements for trial running? 21 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, I recall the --22 I recall the expectation being that there needed to 23 be 12 consecutive days of trial running and I 24 believe ultimately it was decided that there could 25 be 12 days of trial running, but that minor

1	interruptions that were later addressed would be
2	acceptable in terms of not restarting the clock on
3	the 12 days.
4	And so if there was a major
5	interruption, the clock on the 12 days would have
6	to restart but if there was a minor interruption
7	that could be quickly addressed but it would be
8	considered like a pause, I guess, for a lack of a
9	better description.
10	But the 12 consecutive days would not
11	be impacted by that kind of minor interruption that
12	was quickly addressed.
13	LIZ MCLELLAN: And when was that change
14	was that a change from the original information
15	that you received?
16	STEPHEN BLAIS: I remember the
17	conversations always being 12 consecutive days of
18	trial running. But in fairness to nearly the last,
19	for the year and a bit before that point, I had not
20	been in as many detailed briefings about rail
21	operations because my role had changed.
22	And I don't know what conversations
23	took place about, you know, in that intervening
24	time. But my recollection was 12 consecutive days
25	of running.

1 LIZ McLELLAN: And how was the change 2 from the 12 consecutive days communicated to you? 3 I don't recall. STEPHEN BLAIS: Т 4 definitely read about it in a newspaper or online. 5 I don't recall if staff communicated that to us in 6 another way. 7 Is that surprising to LIZ MCLELLAN: 8 you that you found out about it in the media before 9 being briefed about it as your role as City 10 Councillor? 11 STEPHEN BLAIS: In fairness, I didn't 12 say that I found about it in the media first. Т 13 don't recall how I found out about it. I know that 14 I've read about it in the newspaper, but I don't 15 recall how I was informed by staff or if I was 16 informed by staff. 17 LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of any 18 discussions with the opening of the system with 19 anything other than full revenue service to allow 20 for a vetting in period? 21 STEPHEN BLAIS: There were 22 conversations as to whether the system could be 23 opened in a, some kind of way for the 24 Sesquicentennial, if it was safe to get people on 25 the train and into the stations and that kind of

1 thing. 2 I believe there was ultimately some 3 kind of visual 3D graphic display in one of the 4 downtown stations as part of the 2017 celebrations. 5 When the transition plan was finalized, б there was definitely a lengthy conversation as to 7 for how long the parallel bus service should remain 8 in place and what the benefits or disadvantages of 9 keeping it in place might be and for how long. And 10 just what the staff's opinion of that was. 11 LIZ MCLELLAN: What's your 12 understanding of the retrofits that are still 13 required for the trains? 14 STEPHEN BLAIS: I've read in the 15 newspaper some issues relating to, I believe it's 16 the sand that gets dispersed under the wheels as 17 part of the winter traction system. In terms of 18 other retrofits, I'm not fully aware of what the 19 City is talking about right now. 20 How would you explain LIZ MCLELLAN: 21 information about system operations as a member of 22 Council? 23 STEPHEN BLAIS: To the public or... 24 How are you briefed on LIZ MCLELLAN: 25 it as a member of Council?

Ottawa Light Rail Commission Stephen Blais on 5/10/2022

1 STEPHEN BLAIS: How are we briefed on 2 it, okay. That's an interesting question. 3 I imagine that there were a number of 4 one-on-one briefings about it, either as scheduled 5 briefings for that effect, or as, you know, 6 sidebars or add-ons to other briefings you might be 7 having at the time and just kind of curiosity 8 taking over. 9 I believe we received -- as I said 10 before, there had been an exercise to change the 11 bus route system in advance of the first RSA to 12 implement the system. 13 So I believe as part of that exercise 14 we were briefed as to what the ultimate kind of 15 look and feel of the system would be at the end 16 when we accepted the train and how the bus network 17 would integrate and interact with that 18 appropriately. 19 So this would have been probably spring 20 of '18, or fall of '18, kind of when we made those 21 bus service changes or when we approved the bus 22 service changes. 23 I'm sure I was in a number of meetings 24 in my office or the Mayor's office just about kind 25 of the ins and outs of how things would work in

1 real life. Because throughout that process, we had 2 done that customer journey exercise I spoke to you 3 about earlier. 4 We had talked about the fare gates and 5 how they would work, what would happen if the 6 Presto machines weren't working. That was 7 happening guite a lot in that timeframe if you'll 8 recall. What the negotiations with the Metrolinx 9 were about Presto. What the conversation was with 10 the gate provider in terms of up service and 11 quaranteeing there would be no revenue loss if the 12 gates were down. And just how that would function 13 at a customer level. 14 Lots of conversations about how the

Lots of conversations about now the buses would enter and exit the platform areas, how they would stack, how you would have certain routes at certain parts of the platform so that it was easy for customers to navigate to the bus they were trying to get to for their neighbourhood to avoid the long queues in buses you used to see at the Mackenzie King Bridge or on Rideau Street.

There were conversations about how the extension of the system in Stage 2 would or would not change things. So those took place in a plethora of either one on one briefings, either at

1 the request of staff or at my request, add-ons to 2 other meetings based on curiosity, and formal 3 presentations to one committee or another. 4 LIZ MCLELLAN: How was it decided that 5 OC Transpo would operate the systems/drive the 6 trains? 7 STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, we took operating 8 out of the procurement model, so I presume at that 9 point it was understood that our transit agency 10 would be responsible for operating the system. 11 LIZ MCLELLAN: And do you know how that 12 decision was made, or you just knew that the "O" 13 was removed from the DBFOM, and that's when you 14 concluded it was OC Transpo that would operate it? 15 Operating was taken out STEPHEN BLAIS: 16 of procurement, and so I don't believe -- I'm not 17 aware of any other conversation having any other 18 agency run the trains other than OC Transpo. 19 LIZ MCLELLAN: Were there any 20 discussions about whether OC Transpo had the 21 requisite experience needed to operate the LRT? 22 STEPHEN BLAIS: I certainly didn't 23 participate in any of those conversations. I think 24 it was generally understood that we did not have 25 the internal expertise, which is why we went out

1 and found out experts to bring into OC Transpo 2 in-house and relied on other consulting experts to 3 help quide us through that process. 4 LIZ MCLELLAN: Who set the performance 5 standards for the systems operations? 6 Well, technically STEPHEN BLAIS: 7 Council I believe approves everything, but we would 8 have approved those standards based on the advice 9 of our staff. 10 And do you recall those LIZ MCLELLAN: 11 meetings and discussions of staff? 12 STEPHEN BLAIS: Not specifically, no. 13 LIZ MCLELLAN: What about in your role 14 as the chair? 15 STEPHEN BLAIS: We certainly had a 16 number of conversations about, you know, the 17 capacity of the vehicle, how many seats were in the 18 vehicle versus how many people would be standing. 19 How often the trains would come? How often could 20 they come, right? 21 There's difference between how you 22 might run them versus what the system is capable of 23 doing. 24 How you would manage the flow of buses 25 in and out of the platforms to avoid crowding and

1 congestion. How the bus network would need to 2 change for stage -- for the first phase versus how 3 it might change for the second phase. 4 There were lots of conversations and 5 discussions about all those things. 6 LIZ MCLELLAN: When was information 7 provided to Council and/or the Transit Commission 8 about the training of OC Transpo employees as 9 drivers? 10 STEPHEN BLAIS: At some point we were 11 advised OC Transpo was doing a recruitment process 12 within the pool of drivers. I presume that also 13 included drivers of the older diesel train, to 14 recruit the number of drivers necessary for the 15 system. 16 I understand it was a very competitive 17 Driving the train was seen as, you know, process. 18 kind of an ideal -- an ideal job to have, kind of 19 There was a process in place to hire prestige job. 20 them in and phase them in. 21 And then there was a simulator that was 22 purchased, I believe as part of procurement to 23 train the drivers on the simulator and then 24 eventually transition them into the vehicles 25 themselves.

1	LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of the
2	ratio for training and driving in the actual
3	vehicle versus the simulator; was Council briefed
4	on that?
5	STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall if we
6	were briefed on that.
7	LIZ McLELLAN: Okay. Was there any
8	discussion about bringing in more experienced
9	operators to operate the trains at the beginning to
10	allow for a phase-in of the drivers that were being
11	trained?
12	STEPHEN BLAIS: Not that I participated
13	in.
14	LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of how the
15	drivers' performance was monitored?
16	STEPHEN BLAIS: Not specific details.
17	LIZ McLELLAN: What is your
18	understanding about the nature of the working
19	relationship between OC Transpo and RTM?
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: So RTM maintains the
21	system; they ensure that the vehicles are in good
22	working order and can be put into service during
23	the day.
24	They, you know, maintain the stations
25	and clean the stations to meet certain standards

1 and they effectively provide that service to OC 2 Transpo as part of the long-term contract with the 3 train. Yeah. 4 LIZ MCLELLAN: What's your 5 understanding of the working relationship between 6 OC Transpo and RTM? 7 That is how I would STEPHEN BLAIS: 8 describe the working relationship in that they 9 provide OC Transpo those services, and OC Transpo 10 relies on them to provide those services. And when 11 those services aren't provided, adjusts on the fly 12 to meet, to the best of their ability, customer 13 demand. 14 There were three weeks LIZ MCLELLAN: 15 of parallel bus service. Do you know how it was 16 decided to do things that way? 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: There were a number of 18 conversations about parallel service and how long 19 it should be. I believe ultimately it was John's 20 decision at an operational level. 21 But there were many conversations about 22 if it should be longer, if it should be shorter, 23 and John would make the ultimate decision, if I 24 remember correctly. 25 What consultants did the LIZ MCLELLAN:

1 City have been active in advising the City since 2 operations began about the operation of the system? 3 STEPHEN BLAIS: As I said, there was 4 that chap who worked on the New Jersey system. 5 There was a firm from England that was brought in 6 for that in the winter that first winter when 7 things started going awry. I've read in the 8 newspaper that Boxfish has been involved; that's 9 what I'm aware of. 10 LIZ McLELLAN: Are you aware of any 11 prior issues for Alstom regarding the wheel cracks 12 before the LRT? 13 STEPHEN BLAIS: Sorry, can you say that 14 again? 15 LIZ MCLELLAN: Are you aware of any 16 instances for wheels cracking on the Alstom 17 vehicles before the LRT? 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: Not that I recall, no. 19 LIZ MCLELLAN: I think we talked about 20 this, but generally who was responsible for 21 communications with the public regarding the LRT 22 during your time as a Councillor? 23 STEPHEN BLAIS: So corporately, it 24 would have been, depended on the nature of the 25 communications. The rail office was generally

1 responsible for doing, you know, public 2 There was a lot of public meetings, consultations. 3 like informational meetings to try to educate 4 people how things would work. 5 There was a lot of public meetings б about station design and station integration. 7 Sometimes that got mixed up with Stage 2, because 8 Stage 2 was undergoing planning kind of at the same 9 time as Stage 1 was beginning construction. 10 And then OC Transpo was involved in a 11 fair deal of communications around route network 12 changes, etcetera. And then for major milestones, 13 either myself or the Mayor would make political 14 announcements about major milestones and trying to 15 promote the system, and certainly he and I both 16 took on very public roles in promoting the system. 17 LIZ MCLELLAN: Who briefed you for those media availabilities on announcements on the 18 19 system? 20 STEPHEN BLAIS: Generally I would say 21 the leadership at OC Transpo, so John and Jocelyne. 22 I imagine corporate media relations was there 23 often. I imagine the Mayor's staff was often 24 I think it really depended on the nature of there. 25 the announcement.

1	LIZ McLELLAN: And were you provided
2	with key messages or Q&A documents for those type
3	of announcements?
4	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yes, very often, yes.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: Was there at any time
6	I think we did speak about this a communications
7	plan or strategy for communications from the
8	City/RTG regarding the project? I think you
9	mentioned that the plan would change based on the
10	phase?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: Yeah there were
12	definitely communications plans for sure based on
13	the elements we were talking about. There was a
14	plan about the route changes for sure. There was a
15	plan about launching the system, for sure.
16	There were we did I mentioned we
17	brought in a kind of model of what the train would
18	look like at Landsdowne Park so there was a
19	communications plan related to that.
20	And at various points in the project,
21	you know, we were trying to get people excited for
22	the train and also allay their concerns of the
23	construction, de stores and inconveniences that
24	were taking place so at different points in the
25	project there were different plans to address

1	issues that might be popping up or needed to be
2	dealt with.
3	LIZ McLELLAN: How did you see Q&A
4	documents or key messages or the communications
5	plan as time went on in the project and there
6	started to be issues and delays?
7	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, we would
8	typically get them by e-mail, or we would be
9	presented with like a printout of a PowerPoint deck
10	in a meeting.
11	LIZ McLELLAN: And in terms of how you
12	would be handling questions during media
13	availabilities during your role as a Councillor,
14	how did that change, how did the City's rapid
15	response change?
16	STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall a real
17	change, to tell you the truth. Obviously, at some
18	point the tone changed. The Mayor was saying "on
19	time, on budget" quite a bit, that was kind of his
20	schtick. At some point that changed, obviously.
21	And when the first RSA was missed, it
22	was about, you know, we were told by the vendor
23	that it would be about a 3 or 4-month delay, if I
24	recall correctly. And so, you know, a short delay
25	is inconvenient, but you need to get it right.

1 But obviously as the RSA continued to 2 be missed progressing from there, the tone became 3 much more serious and concerned, and much more 4 aggressive in terms of the City's posture of the 5 benefits of the procurement model and the security 6 that taxpayers should feel based on the 7 procurement. 8 LIZ MCLELLAN: In terms of payment 9 mechanisms, there were certain payments under the 10 Project Agreement for the maintenance phase that 11 had been made, and there's others that had been 12 held back. What was Council's involvement in 13 making the decision on whether to hold back 14 payments? 15 I don't recall if we STEPHEN BLAIS: 16 were briefed, or if we actively signed off on the 17 Because I believe there was a degree of reports. 18 delegated authority provided to staff on some of 19 those payments. 20 But certainly there were, when the RSA 21 was missed, there was a conversation about stopping 22 I believe there had already been payments. 23 payments stopped as it related to trying to recover 24 costs for the additional bus detours, etcetera, 25 that had to happen.

1 And then of course the balloon payment 2 that is part of the substantial completion was not 3 going to be provided until substantial completion 4 and the City would hold back other milestone and 5 monthly payments until there was resolution about 6 the additional costs as a result of the delays. 7 LIZ McLELLAN: And what was your view 8 on the approach being taken? 9 STEPHEN BLAIS: I doubt that it was the 10 fiscal responsible thing to do, but the contract 11 provided us a degree of security that we were 12 paying for. 13 We were paying for a product and a 14 service. We were not receiving the product and the 15 service. And so it was vendor's responsibility to 16 fulfill their end of the agreement, and I felt no 17 need to pay them until they did. 18 There were conversations about ensuring --19 despite that friction, trying to maintain a level 20 of working relationship to continue in a 21 vendor-client relationship, given the long-term 22 nature of the relationship. 23 LIZ MCLELLAN: At a certain point the 24 City stepped in and guaranteed RTG's long-term debt 25 and stepped into the shoes of the lender.

1 Mr. Wardle advised that it was more of a debt swap. 2 But are you familiar with the 3 circumstances around that decision? 4 STEPHEN BLAIS: Do you recall when that 5 happened? 6 I actually don't know LIZ MCLELLAN: 7 exactly when it happened. 8 Ms. Young, I'm not sure if you know 9 either, but I'm aware of the circumstances around 10 what happened. 11 I assume it would have EMILY YOUNG: 12 been around the time that the City negotiated to 13 purchase additional vehicles for Stage 2. But in 14 terms of specific year, unfortunately I do not have 15 that handy. 16 LIZ McLELLAN: Are you familiar with 17 what we're speaking about? 18 STEPHEN BLAIS: Now that you've 19 mentioned it, I have a broad remembering of that, 20 but I don't -- I would need some more contextual 21 information to isolate the memory a little bit 22 more, to tell you the truth. 23 LIZ MCLELLAN: The contextual 24 information is that the City is looking at Stage 2, 25 and the Project Agreement and how to move forward

1	with Stage 2, and there are certain changes that
2	need to be made to the Project Agreement.
3	So in terms of avoiding those changes
4	and in terms of avoiding equity infusions that were
5	required, the City decided to step into the shoes
6	of the lender and guarantee RTG's debt.
7	And then more information was provided
8	to City Council as a result of that information.
9	FRANCOIS LANDRY: Were you even a party
10	to these discussions?
11	STEPHEN BLAIS: I certainly remember
12	the presentation to Council. I remember Kent
13	Kirkpatrick made a presentation to Council about
14	purchasing the Stage 2 trains early and there was
15	certainly financial mechanisms as part of that
16	briefing.
17	I don't recall the specifics, though.
18	But I do remember Kent was the City Manager when we
19	bought the additional vehicles for Stage 2, for
20	sure.
21	LIZ McLELLAN: Are you referring to
22	notes?
23	STEPHEN BLAIS: I'm going through a
24	time line, yes.
25	LIZ MCLELLAN: Can we please have a
L	

1	copy of the time line you're referring to.
2	STEPHEN BLAIS: Sure.
3	U/T FRANCOIS LANDRY: We'll review and
4	advise.
5	LIZ McLELLAN: You're not aware of the
6	impacts on the City for stepping into the shoes of
7	the lender to RTG?
8	STEPHEN BLAIS: I don't recall in this
9	moment, no.
10	LIZ McLELLAN: Ms. Young, I don't know
11	if you have any questions.
12	EMILY YOUNG: I have a couple of follow
13	ups. And forgive me if this was me just sort of
14	not understanding your evidence, Mr. Blais.
15	But on the point of OC Transpo being
16	the operator and when that decision was made, my
17	understanding was that you said that the
18	procurement was initially presented without a third
19	party operator; is that correct?
20	STEPHEN BLAIS: I recall the original
21	presentation was design-build-maintain was the
22	original recommendation. And there was a caveat in
23	that report, indicating that future recommendations
24	would come forward about finance, relating to
25	providing more security to the City. And that

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1	ultimately, a second report came forward with the
2	final design-build-finance-maintain model.
3	I don't recall any real conversations
4	about having someone other than OC Transpo operate
5	the system.
б	EMILY YOUNG: So would you have
7	understood that decision to have been made before
8	Council is presented with those procurement model
9	options?
10	STEPHEN BLAIS: Well, no decision is
11	made before Council makes it. My understanding
12	would be, staff were advising against having an
13	outside operator, because they were not
14	recommending an operator as part of procurement.
15	EMILY YOUNG: Do you think that that
16	was the right decision, looking back?
17	STEPHEN BLAIS: You know, it's hard to
18	say. You know, certainly I think it would have
19	been a challenging political and union environment
20	had the recommendation been to bring in an outside
21	operator.
22	The City had just gone through a major
23	transit strike in 2009, which shut down the City
24	and dramatically and negatively impacted the
25	relationship with residents and damaged the

1 reparation and relationship with OC Transpo. 2 And so I think employee confidence was, 3 I believe, seen to be fairly low coming out of that 4 strike and a lot of work had been done to 5 positively change that relationship and that 6 outcome and that relationship with residents as 7 well. 8 And personally I don't think a report 9 advising to have some outside agency operate it 10 would have been successful, just given that context 11 and the history that had recently been gone 12 through. 13 But in fairness, I was never part of 14 any conversation that seriously looked at that as 15 an option. 16 LIZ McLELLAN: I'm cognizant of 17 Mr. Wardle's -- actually, Ms. Young, are you done 18 with your questions? 19 EMILY YOUNG: Yes. 20 LIZ McLELLAN: Okay. I'm cognizant of 21 Mr. Wardle's time. I just have one last question 22 on public communications. 23 How were media request responses 24 handled? 25 So if I received a STEPHEN BLAIS:

1 media request, to me, I would handle it myself, 2 like, within my office and my staff. I believe 3 that if the City received a media requests they 4 would feed it in to the appropriate office. 5 Occasionally I was asked to respond to those media 6 requests and I imagine other people did at various 7 times as well. 8 LIZ MCLELLAN: Did you have to receive 9 approval from City staff or the Mayor's office for 10 the responses that you gave? Or did you seek 11 approval? 12 STEPHEN BLAIS: No. 13 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. 14 STEPHEN BLAIS: I imagine I often 15 probably checked to ensure certain facts were 16 correct, but never approval. 17 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. Was there 18 anything else that we did not discuss today that 19 you think that we should have covered? 20 FRANCOIS LANDRY: I don't know if 21 Mr. Blais can answer that. I mean, if you have 22 questions --23 LIZ MCLELLAN: It's just a general 24 question that we asked at the end of every meeting. 25 It's a question of --

1	FRANCOIS LANDRY: I that's your job,
2	not his. He's here to answer your questions.
3	LIZ McLELLAN: We're just trying to
4	gather all the information that we feel witnesses
5	would like to cover.
6	FRANCOIS LANDRY: Fair enough, but
7	whether he feels, whether he knows if you've
8	covered everything, he doesn't know what you know.
9	I mean we're here to answer questions. We've been
10	going at it for almost three hours now.
11	But for him to answer a question
12	whether he knows if you've covered everything, you
13	know, no, he's not going to answer that.
14	LIZ McLELLAN: All we're asking if
15	there's a certain topic that Mr. Blais wanted to
16	speak to. There's nothing else behind it.
17	FRANCOIS LANDRY: I'm sorry, that's a
18	completely different question. You asked initially
19	if there's something that you haven't covered that
20	you should have covered.
21	Now you're saying is there something
22	that he wants to talk about.
23	Mr. Blais is there something you want
24	to talk about?
25	STEPHEN BLAIS: I think that LRT is a

1 transformative project for our city. It will 2 connect our city every corner eventually east, 3 west, south to the downtown which will be 4 fundamental for how our city grows, how we address 5 the climate crisis that we are in, and how we 6 progress to continue to be the world class city 7 that we are and aspire and continue to be. 8 I am very proud of the fact we're able 9 to secure LRT to Orléans as a result of my 10 leadership and work on City Council. 11 FRANCOIS LANDRY: Thank you. 12 Part of the Commission's LIZ MCLELLAN: 13 mandate to consider recommendations on what 14 occurred; do you have any recommendations that you 15 would like to provide for the Commissioner's 16 consideration? 17 STEPHEN BLAIS: I'm sorry, I wasn't 18 really prepared to think about that question. So I 19 don't have any off the top of my head, no. 20 LIZ MCLELLAN: Okay. Thank you, 21 Mr. Blais, for your time. We can go off record. 22 23 -- Concluded at 11:49 a.m. 24 25

1	REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
2	
3	I, JUDITH M. CAPUTO, RPR, CSR, CRR,
4	Certified Shorthand Reporter, certify;
5	That the foregoing proceedings were
6	taken before me at the time and place therein set
7	forth; at which time the interviewee was put under
8	oath by me;
9	That the statements of the presenters
10	and all comments made at the time of the meeting
11	were recorded stenographically by me and
12	transcribed at my direction;
13	That the foregoing is a Certified
14	Transcript of my shorthand notes so taken.
15	
16	Dated this 11th day of May, 2022.
17	fudite al laputo, COR, CAR
18	
19	NEESONS, A VERITEXT COMPANY
20	PER: JUDITH M. CAPUTO, RPR, CSR, CRR
21	
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