



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

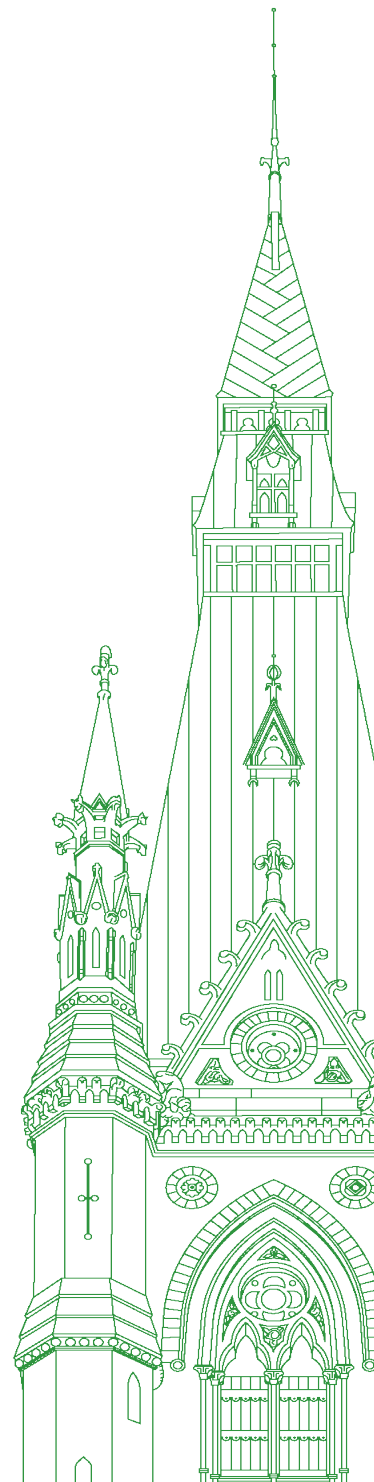
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in the 21st bilateral meeting in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, from August 27 to 30, 2023, and the Canada-China Legislative Association and Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting their participation at the 44th general assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, from August 6 to 10, 2023.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 36th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Hydrogen’s Potential to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions”. I believe there will be a dissenting report coming from the official opposition shortly. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table the Conservative dissenting report to this report.

Conservative members on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts demand action be taken, given the incompetence of government ministers when it comes to building a hydrogen industry in Canada. The commissioner found that the government’s plan is not transparent or clear and that it relies on policies that have not been announced and are not in effect. The truth is, the Liberal government does not have a real plan or real strategy to make hydrogen a greater part of Canada’s energy supply. Instead, both departments

relied on unfounded assumptions, incomplete modelling and faulty data to present an ideal scenario that is not realistic.

Our Conservative dissenting report provides five recommendations that demand accountability through accurate costs, a consistent framework and a real long-term plan. Aspirations are not a plan.

* * *

PROTECTING CANADA’S NATURAL WONDERS ACT

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change) moved that Bill S-14, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, the Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act, the Rouge National Urban Park Act and the National Parks of Canada Fishing Regulations, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I have the honour to present two petitions on behalf of residents of Châteauguay—Lacolle concerning the fight against online harms to children.

These residents have noticed that there is a growing number of reports of Canadian children being exposed to online sexual extortion and as well as other serious harms via unfiltered access to platforms that either directly or indirectly subject children to sexually explicit material and the risk of being targeted by online child predators.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to immediately table comprehensive legislation addressing the issue of online harms to children that will support parents and guardians in protecting children from online predators and unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material as well as holding technology companies accountable for ensuring any online platform accessible to children is safe for children.

I am also tabling a second petition on the same subject.

Routine Proceedings

• (1005)
[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone in this House is fully aware, this weekend marked the second anniversary of Putin's unprovoked and illegal war on Ukraine. Given the unspeakable violence Putin has unleashed on Ukrainians, which I can speak to as someone who has been there three times since the war started, I am incredibly proud to present a petition today that I have received from citizens across Canada.

As members are aware, we have welcomed over 210,000 displaced Ukrainians to Canada, pursuant to the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel. I know I speak on behalf of every member in this House when I say that they have been contributing to our communities from sea to sea to sea.

The petition I have been asked to present is to ensure that there is no uncertainty insofar as their future prospects are concerned or delay in implementing a PR pathway program for them. The petitioners are calling upon our government to provide Ukrainian nationals displaced to Canada in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine with a streamlined pathway to permanent residence, which would address those who are not beneficiaries of the family reunification pathway announced on October 23, 2023.

PAKISTAN

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present here today. The first one is in recognition of International Mother Language Day, which was celebrated last week. I want to highlight Sindhi speakers in Pakistan. There are over 60 million speakers of that language; however, it is not recognized by the Canadian consulate in Karachi or the high commission in Islamabad. The petitioners are looking to have their language recognized, as it is a beautiful language that is spoken by a great number of people.

Meharbani.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have today is in regard to medical assistance in dying. The petitioners are seeking the end of the idea of expanding medical assistance in dying to those with mental illness as a sole underlying condition. The petitioners are looking for the government not just to delay it, but to stop it altogether.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present this petition today. It is supported by the Canadian Farmers' Markets association. I also want to thank all farmers and farmers' markets from coast to coast to coast.

The petitioners who have signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 66 and initiate a national program for all provincial farmers' market nutrition coupon programs. This would match provinces that already contribute to their farmers' market nutrition coupon programs and help provinces that do not have these coupon programs with program development. They also cite that farmers' markets are a key tool for

COVID-19 recovery, small business incubators, domestic system and food security builders, and local economy community builders.

Farmers' market coupon programs are a key support for new market development and for existing markets and their provincial associations. A national program would create more food security and resiliency by giving vulnerable people access to healthy, locally grown foods and dietary education, while positively impacting the physical and mental health of participants by increasing the amount of diversity of fruits and vegetables they consume.

This has been done in British Columbia. It has been done very well.

• (1010)

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present my first petition here on public prayer in the Canadian Armed Forces. The recent directive that was issued to military chaplains banning religious symbols and public prayer at ceremonies, such as that for Remembrance Day, actually undermines religious freedom. This, ironically, is one of the very values that our men and women in uniform have fought to defend.

These petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to affirm the right of public prayer in our Canadian Armed Forces.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting this morning is with regard to Bill C-318. Adoptive and intended parents are at a disadvantage under the current EI system, and all parents are deserving of equal access to parental benefits. Bill C-318 would deliver equitable access for parental leave for adoptive and intended parents alike.

Actually, the Speaker has ruled that the passage of Bill C-318 requires a royal recommendation. These petitioners, citizens of Canada, call upon the government to support adoptive and intended parents by providing the royal recommendation that is needed for Bill C-318.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the intelligent people from the common-sense riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, in addition to those from Nipissing—Timiskaming, Kanata—Carleton and Nickel Belt.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to repeal the regulations with respect to the restraints on natural health products that were passed last year. The reason is that millions of people rely upon them. Taking vitamins and other health products prevents them from getting sick and having to take pharmaceuticals. The people really would like those regulations repealed.

CONTRACEPTION

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition demanding universal access to free contraception, which has gathered thousands of signatures. This policy is based on sound economics; it would save taxpayer dollars; strengthen individuals, families and communities; and make life more affordable for everyday Canadians.

Reproductive rights are human rights. We have seen access to reproductive care being restricted in states and countries led by Conservative ideologues.

Currently, in Canada, British Columbia and Quebec provide coverage for contraceptives; others, such as my home province of Alberta, led by a Conservative ideologue premier, do not. Now is the time to ensure that access to contraception always remains secure in Canada. A federal policy for universal access to prescription contraceptives would be an important step in protecting reproductive rights in Canada.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of correctional officers in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and the surrounding areas who are concerned about the prison needle exchange program currently being operated by Correctional Service Canada. I have heard about this in the institution in Battle River—Crowfoot as well.

Drugs and drug paraphernalia are considered contraband in prisons, yet the government is forcing correctional officers to simply turn a blind eye and allow dangerous drugs to be used in prisons. These correctional officers are calling on the government to immediately cancel the prison needle exchange program, stop permitting the use of illicit drugs in Canadian prisons and focus on efforts to help inmates recover from their addictions.

It is an honour to present this petition in the people's House of Commons today.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to put forward a petition on behalf of Madame Rousseau and students at Uxbridge Secondary School. There are over 647 signatures.

Madame Rousseau and her students learned about indigenous peoples in this country and want to bring to the government's attention the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They specifically want to raise calls to action 2, 9 and 19, which call for data that is necessary to measure the completion of these legacy calls. They also point out call to action 30, which asks the government to eliminate the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in prison. They want to ensure that the government is moving ahead with truth and reconciliation and these calls to action.

Business of Supply

I am very proud that the students in my riding at Uxbridge Secondary School have raised this and brought it forward to our government.

• (1015)

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I present a petition that I have tabled previously. It places emphasis on what I believe is the backbone of Canada's health care system: nurses. The petitioners are asking for governments to co-operate in order to deliver better health care results and support nurses wherever they can.

Interestingly enough, it also refers to the high cost of pharmaceuticals and the need for government to work with other governments to put into place affordable medications, leading toward a national pharmacare program.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1020)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

(i) the Auditor General's ArriveCAN audit determined that the app cost taxpayers at least \$60-million, but concluded it is "impossible to determine the actual cost of the application",

(ii) the Procurement Ombud found that in 76% of ArriveCAN contracts, some or all of the contractors' proposed resources, such as subcontractors and employees, did not perform any work,

(iii) GC Strategies, an IT company that does no actual IT work, was paid nearly \$20-million in relation to the ArriveCAN app,

the House:

(a) call on the Prime Minister to table in the House of Commons, no later than Monday, March 18, 2024, a report which details the complete direct and associated costs concerning the ArriveCAN app incurred to date, including the total amounts paid to contractors and subcontractors, broken down by contractor or subcontractor, and the value of staff time represented by the salary, bonuses and other expenses paid to all public servants who worked on the app, in relation to all expenses respecting,

Business of Supply

- (i) research and development of the app,
 - (ii) management and storage of the data collected by the app,
 - (iii) software development, testing and maintenance,
 - (iv) training for government employees for using and troubleshooting the app,
 - (v) call centres used for the app,
 - (vi) ArriveCAN-related communications with travellers by e-mail or text message,
 - (vii) market and opinion research,
 - (viii) advertising,
 - (ix) public relations,
 - (x) merchandise, gifts and promotional material,
 - (xi) processing of security clearances,
 - (xii) travellers' expenses after being wrongfully directed by the ArriveCAN app to quarantine,
 - (xiii) the services of legal counsel involved in contract negotiation, litigation arising from procurement or the use and implementation of the app, and the numerous investigations conducted related to the app,
 - (xiv) any other costs related to the ArriveCAN app; and
- (b) call on the government to collect and recoup all funds paid to ArriveCAN contractors and subcontractors which did no work on the ArriveCAN app, within 100 days of this motion being adopted, and for the Prime Minister to table a report in the House demonstrating that taxpayer funds have been repaid.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

After eight years, this Prime Minister and the costly coalition with the Bloc Québécois are not worth the cost or the corruption. After eight years, everything costs more. This government's inflationary taxes and deficits are driving up the price of essentials so much that two million people a month depend on food banks. That number is incredible; it is unprecedented. After eight years of this Prime Minister, work does not pay. People make it, he takes it. After eight years of this Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled. They have even tripled in Montreal, the city the Prime Minister represents in the House of Commons. When the federal government prints money, causing widespread inflation, and funds local bureaucracies to prevent construction, adding to demand while squeezing supply, that causes a crisis. For the first time in Canadian history, young people cannot even dream of being able to buy a home. It now takes 25 years to save up enough money for a down payment in Toronto. Before this Prime Minister, people could pay off their entire mortgage in 25 years. After eight years of this Prime Minister, with the Bloc's support, people are living in tents in almost every major city in this country. Homeless people are trying to survive in tent cities and on the streets. We have not seen this kind of thing since the Great Depression.

What is the Bloc Québécois doing? Bloc members vote for every single one of this Prime Minister's economic policies. They voted to raise the tax on gas by 17¢ a litre over the next few years. They voted in favour of all the government's spending. The Bloc Québécois gave the green light to all of the estimates, where discretionary money is allocated by the House of Commons. It is also interesting to note that, generally speaking, those expenditures are centralized. The money is spent in Ottawa, by Ottawa, for Ottawa and is not part of the transfers to the provinces that are already established in legislation. We are not talking about health care spending or other transfers to the Quebec government. We are talking

about operational and discretionary spending imposed by this out-of-control Prime Minister, which has led to a doubling of the national debt, the worst inflation in 40 years and massive waste.

Consider the ArriveCAN app, or arrive scam, as we call it. It should have cost \$80,000. When the Prime Minister came to the House of Commons asking for tens of millions of dollars, we wondered what was happening. We had been told it would cost \$80,000. Now the Prime Minister wanted another \$24 million. It was bizarre. Naturally, we voted against it. However, the Bloc Québécois said no problem, it was just another \$24 million, and they voted in favour. When the scandal was exposed by the Auditor General of Canada following the Conservative motion I moved in the House over a year ago, the Bloc Québécois members suddenly announced that they were outraged by the waste they had voted for. A journalist asked them why they had voted in favour of spending an extra \$24 million on an app that should have cost \$80,000. I will quote the Bloc Québécois whip. What he said is truly astounding:

● (1025)

“We’re not going to scrutinize everything the government spends. We’re just going to tell the government, ‘Go ahead, spend the money’.”

What is the point of the Bloc? Its only purpose is to encourage the government to take Quebecers' money, spend it as it sees fit and waste it, while single mothers in Chambly, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières struggle just to feed their kids. They have to pay taxes for this waste because the Bloc supports the government's spending.

That is why the common-sense Conservative Party is demanding all the details on this spending. The Auditor General said she could not even say how much was spent on arrive scam. She said it was at least \$60 million, but there are documents missing. We must get hold of all these documents, which is why we are moving a motion in the House today demanding that the government produce all the documents associated with arrive scam, so we can see all the costs and the extent of the corruption. Seventy-six percent of contractors did no work at all. One company with four employees that is headquartered in the basement of a cottage received \$250 million. It does no actual IT work, but it received IT contracts.

We need to know the truth.

The government is spending \$21 billion on outside contractors. We are going to do away with that to save money and redistribute it to Canadians through lower taxes.

Our priorities are as follows: We are going to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

These are the Conservative Party's common-sense priorities, and we intend to keep our promises to everyone.

[English]

The NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. After eight years, his inflationary taxes and deficits have doubled the national debt, have driven inflation to 40-year highs and have driven two million people to food banks, a record-smashing number. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, work does not pay. People make it, and he takes it.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled, mortgage payments have doubled, rent has doubled and down payments needed for an average home have doubled. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, we have crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. He is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

Nothing could be more emblematic of this waste than the arrive scam app, an app that was supposed to cost \$80,000 but went up to at least \$60 million. What did the NDP do when it found out that the Prime Minister needed more money for his app? It voted for that money. Even though it knew full well that the app was supposed to cost \$80,000, it voted for at least \$24 million additional dollars for an app that did not work. About 76% of the contractors did no actual work. The prime contractor got IT contracts even though it does no IT work, and it is headquartered in the basement of a cottage. That is part of a \$21-billion boom in outsourcing by the government, a 100% increase in external consultants that costs \$1,400 for every single Canadian family, which are federal taxes for consultants: \$1,400.

Today, we call for all the details on arrive scam to be released. The Auditor General says she does not know how much was spent. It was at least \$60 million. That is why we want the government to be obliged by the House to release all the documents, all the costs and to tell the truth. We want to know everybody who got rich through this corruption and how much Canadians actually had to pay for.

We are going to get rid of that app. We are going to cut back on outside consultants. We are going to cap spending, cut waste, and balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates, because our common-sense priorities are to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

It is common sense. Let us bring it home.

• (1030)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can we imagine that bumper sticker? They are going to fix the budget, they say. Allow me to tell—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the hon. member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is actually code for the Conservative hidden agenda. We talk about the MAGA Conser-

Business of Supply

vatives. We can talk about the far right, headed by the leader himself. Over the weekend, I watched a YouTube video by Donald Trump that was saying something like “We are common-sense conservatives.” The Conservatives should look in the mirror. Today we have the common-sense Conservatives saying they would fix the budget, which is really a hidden agenda that means cuts: cuts to the civil service and cuts to social programs.

Will the leader of the Conservative Party be honest with Canadians and tell us exactly what it is he plans on cutting?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, yes I will: We will cut arrive scam. We are going to cut the \$21 billion given to high-priced consultants, which has gone up by 100%, doubling under the government. We will cut the \$35-billion Canada Infrastructure Bank that has not built any infrastructure. We are going to cut the billion-dollar green fund that has not actually delivered any green technology, of which \$150 million has already been misplaced and misappropriated. I could go on, but I am being extremely specific because it is so easy to list the waste that we would cut.

The member said that all of these things, axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime, should be made into bumper stickers. They will be made into bumper stickers because we have a very easy-to-understand, common-sense agenda, and there will be vehicles right across this country that will share that agenda. He said that it is hidden. How could it possibly be hidden if it is going to be on a bumper sticker?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative members are all worked up. I get it. Today is their opposition day.

I am going to try to ask the Conservative leader a direct question, but I have no illusions. I do not expect an answer because he plays exactly the same political games as the Prime Minister: He refuses to answer difficult questions and tosses around political slogans. Still, I will give it a try.

When the member for Carleton was parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport, from 2011 to 2013, his department awarded \$6.5 million to the owners of GC Strategies, the same persons currently involved in the ArriveCAN matter, but operating under a different name back then.

Could the Conservative leader tell us what that money was used for and how it was spent?

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to look at all of the contracts given to individuals and businesses. There was no arrive scam at the time. We could not foresee that, 12 or 13 years later, there would be a scandal involving a business operating under another name. I know that the former Conservative government did spend the money, but I would add that, during the years he is talking about, we were spending half as much on outside consultants. We were spending less on bureaucracy, less on outside consultants.

Yesterday, I was in Saguenay. People wanted to know why this member of Parliament votes for the Prime Minister and against the interests of Saguenay. He votes for higher taxes on gas and diesel for trucks. He votes for higher taxes on small businesses. He votes for all of the Liberal government's inflationary spending, including all the arrive scam spending.

He should have stood up and apologized to his constituents for having voted to throw their money out the window in support of the Prime Minister's arrive scam.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start with this: It was actually the Conservative government that cut IT staff in the public service. We saw outsourcing go up with the big six companies; it doubled under the Conservatives. We saw it quadruple under the current Liberal government. It has become unequivocally clear that the corporate-controlled parties, both Liberal and Conservative, are continuing to go to the highly paid private sector to give it taxpayer dollars to provide services that could be provided by the public service.

We put forward a motion, as New Democrats, to expand the study beyond ArriveCAN, as we know GC Strategies started doing business with the government under the Harper regime. We asked to expand it to look at all outsourcing, including Deloitte, which went from \$97 million doing contracts with the Government of Canada to \$275 million. My question to the Conservative leader is this: Why is it that the Conservatives will not let us expand the study? It has been a year since the motion passed. Is it because Peter MacKay is a director at Deloitte or is it because Pierre Pettigrew is a director at Deloitte? We know that it is the corporate-controlled parties that are blocking us from having a real look at what is going on—

• (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time. I will allow the hon. leader to answer.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, let us start with “corporate-controlled”. The NDP-Liberal government is corporate-controlled. It voted together, including that member, to double the amount of money spent on outside consultants. He voted to increase outsourcing by \$11 billion, 100%. He voted to make his constituents on Vancouver Island spend \$1,400 per household on outside consultants.

Conservatives voted against every single nickel of that outsourcing. We are the only party in the House that can say that. All three costly coalition parties voted for those things. We are going to cut the outsourcing. We are going to save the money. We are going to

deliver common sense for the common people by axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are introducing a motion for debate in the House. This motion invites all sitting members from all parties, the 338 members of the House of Commons, to do some serious soul-searching.

Let us think back to the pandemic. Let us think back to the report that the Parliamentary Budget Officer released after the pandemic. He said that there had been \$500 billion in COVID-specific spending, but he could not explain where \$200 billion of it had gone. In the report, he says that, although spending was needed during the pandemic, there were amazingly few controls. This first report highlighted something very important. He was unable to explain \$200 billion in spending. We may now even be able to see that some of the remaining \$300 billion in spending was a bit fishy.

Another very important person involved in scrutinizing what happens to public funds is the Auditor General of Canada. Last year, the Conservative Party asked the House to vote. In November 2022, the Auditor General was asked to investigate ArriveCAN. ArriveCAN seemed a little strange from the start. It is a tool intended to track people's movements and obtain information on their vaccination status. In theory, it should not have cost much. However, we eventually became aware that something was wrong. It was costing a lot of money to create something that should not have been all that complicated. When certain information was brought to light, particularly concerning contracts with some odd people, it was decided that an investigation was in order.

The Auditor General did her job. She spent almost a year and a half trying to get answers. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of Canada's Auditor General, who is appointed to work independently to verify and examine everything concerning the administration of public funds in relation to a particular file. She released her report two weeks ago, saying she was discouraged and was unable to carry out her work. From what she could see, at least \$60 million was spent on this app, but it could have been more, because she could not find the supporting documentation. She could not find the contracts. When she did find an invoice, there were no details. It simply listed an amount of a few million dollars, and the cheque was sent out. She was really depressed to see how public funds were handled in this file.

Business of Supply

In addition to the Auditor General, the procurement ombud did his own analysis, and our motion today mentions that too. He released a report a week or two ago, stating that 76% of the companies involved in the ArriveCAN file had performed no work. That means that \$45 million was paid to people who did not even do any work. It is one scandal after another. When the Auditor General's report was released, I said it was the tip of the iceberg. I was sure more would be found and that this was not over.

Today, we want to shed light specifically on ArriveCAN. We have a great deal of information showing that there was outright corruption. At what level was the corruption happening? Who did it? How did they do it? We do not know, but we want to know. That is why we need to get to the bottom of this matter. I expect everyone in the House to support the motion that the Conservative Party is putting forward today. There is nothing remotely political about the Conservative Party's motion. It is a motion containing three specific points with specific queries about documents. This is simply an effort to shed light on the matter, so that the House can get the documents and information necessary to understand what went on in with ArriveCAN.

Last week, I sat on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Auditor General was there. The deputy minister of procurement and the assistant deputy minister of departmental oversight also attended. I asked the latter, whose office is in charge of oversight, a question concerning ArriveCAN, and she did not know what to say. She started giving me a vague answer. I told her that I did not want a written answer that did not mean anything. I wanted a real answer. I asked a question, which appears in the record of the meeting. I asked her if, when she heard about this issue a year and a half ago, everyone in her office started banging their heads against the wall wondering what was going on.

● (1040)

We could see that no one really knew what was going on. Another thing to take into account is that there are people in offices who have specific oversight functions, but still do not know what is going on or, in any case, do not appear to know or do not want to know. I do not know what to make of all this. The point is that the federal government's overall management of public funds is troubling. As I mentioned earlier, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Let us keep in mind that the Parliamentary Budget Officer did not even know where \$200 billion of the budget deficit had gone. We are now dealing with the ArriveCAN scandal, an app that cost \$60 million when it should have cost \$80,000. There are a lot of questions about government spending in general.

We also learned other very important facts. Minh Doan, the Prime Minister's chief information officer at the Information, Science and Technology Branch, apparently deleted tens of thousands of emails concerning ArriveCAN. Why would he have deleted tens of thousands of emails documenting discussions between the people who were managing ArriveCAN if there was nothing to hide? That is another problem we have to solve. That is one of the reasons why the House of Commons needs to examine this issue in depth.

This morning we learned something else about the member for Québec, the current Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

During COVID-19, he was the president of the Treasury Board and therefore responsible for issuing contract management directives. I even asked him some questions at the time at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates about contract management. The minister did not seem to know how to answer. He often offloaded questions to his deputy minister. Since last summer's cabinet shuffle, he is now the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. According to *La Presse*, the minister's briefing book contained some sensitive items. The minister was told to pay attention to the shipbuilding strategy with Davie, the F-35 file and other issues. However, there were no notes about ArriveCAN. At the time, the Auditor General was conducting an investigation into a matter related to the procurement of federal government contracts. The ArriveCAN file was not even part of the minister's briefing. He was not even told to pay attention to it or that it was a sensitive issue. That is another question that needs to be explored. Why is it that when someone leads a department, they do not get any notes on a file that is being investigated by the Auditor General? There are so many questions, which is why our motion is very clear.

I will close by referring to the mandate letter issued to the member for Québec when he was president of the Treasury Board. In the mandate letter, the Prime Minister clearly states:

I also expect us to continue to raise the bar on openness, effectiveness and transparency in government. This means a government that is open by default. It means better digital capacity and services for Canadians. It means a strong and resilient public service. It also means humility and continuing to acknowledge mistakes when we make them.

That last sentence is what I would like to hear from the government. I would like it to acknowledge that it made mistakes. Since the tabling of the Auditor General's report, we have yet to hear the government express a modicum of regret. On the contrary, it tries to put it off, saying it will do better in the future. These mandate letters are useless because all we see is scandals and the government does not seem to want to acknowledge the truth.

● (1045)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member talks about accountability, what he has said is not really true. We need to put this into perspective with respect to what was taking place in a worldwide pandemic. Governments around the world were responding as much as they could. In Canada, I would like to think that we provided the types of supports that Canadians and businesses required, and there were all kinds of government expenditures.

Business of Supply

We have a civil service, which is second to no other, and there is a process that needs to be followed, particularly for procurement. When the government has been made aware of issues related to it, it has been very transparent about it. Internal work has been done. Things have been pointed out by the Auditor General, and the government is working to rectify those issues.

Is it not a responsible way for a government to react when it finds out, to take specific actions? That is exactly what this government has done.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, to answer my colleague's question, I have here the transcript of a committee meeting that I attended on June 16, 2021.

At that meeting, I asked a question about an April 2020 memorandum indicating that Treasury Board would be relaxing the rules for awarding contracts to speed up the process during the pandemic.

In June 2021, the worst was over. We were regaining control. I asked the committee if we could take back control, and I was told that there were too many important investments to make and so on.

We were already asking questions at that point and we could see that there were things that were not working. We understand that the situation was complicated at the beginning of the pandemic. However, after a year, we could also see that we needed to take back control. There were also other questionable contracts, but I will not get into that right now.

Something went wrong. That much is clear.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy debating with my colleagues. We may not always share the same opinions, but I enjoy a debate based on facts.

Since 2015, the Bloc Québécois has voted against every Trudeau government budget and every Trudeau government economic statement.

Knowing this, when the Conservatives say that the Bloc Québécois supports all of the Trudeau government's spending, would my colleague, hypothetically, without naming names, agree with—

The Deputy Speaker: This is the third time. I would like to remind the member that we must say the Liberal government or use another wording.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

The Bloc Québécois has not supported any of this government's budgets or economic statements.

I would like to ask a question of my colleague, who is a respectable man.

If a politician—and I am not naming names—were to say that the Bloc Québécois supports all of this government's spending, would he not be shamelessly lying to the public?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague by saying that, with respect to the issue being discussed today, the Bloc Québécois voted for the appropriations, knowing full well that they were intended for ArriveCAN. There were two separate appropriations of \$12.5 million each.

That is why it is so strange to see the members of the Bloc Québécois react by saying that what they voted for is scandalous. The House leader of the Bloc Québécois said that that was normal, that they did not have time to look at everything and that the money had to go out. That is what happened.

• (1050)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we saw outsourcing to highly paid consultants double under the Conservatives, including GC Strategies owners, who were formerly operating under another company. We saw the Conservatives bring in the Phoenix pay system. It was supposed to save \$80 million, but it has cost \$3.5 billion. Therefore, we cannot give credit to the Conservatives that they are going to lead the path with respect to taking on highly paid consultants.

I brought forward a motion at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates a year ago to expand the study to include the big six corporations. We saw Deloitte go from \$97 million last year to \$275 million this year. In fact, it did \$11 million worth of business in Canada in 2015 and now it is up to \$275 million. However, it did not want to look at it. Why? Because the corporate controlled parties have a former Liberal cabinet minister, Pierre Pettigrew, as a managing director. They have a former Conservative cabinet minister, Peter MacKay, as a managing director.

When will the Conservatives stop protecting their former ministers and their Conservative insiders, and will they start taking a look at all of the outsourcing and actually try to fix this problem?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer a question about Phoenix.

It is true that it was the Conservative government at the time that launched the project, because it would take time to change the payroll management system. However, let us recall that the Liberal government came to power in fall 2015 and that, in March 2016, it decided to activate the Phoenix system despite the fact that the deputy minister and everyone else told the government that the system was not ready and that there was still work to do. Since it was in a hurry, the government decided to activate the Phoenix system in March 2016. Consequently, we will not accept responsibility for deploying a system that was not ready. That decision was made by the Liberal government.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by taking a moment to state that this government expects all public servants to act in the manner that represents the values and ethics code for the public service, including the obligation to serve public interests under the law.

I can also tell members that the CBSA is comprised of dedicated and talented employees who are united in this effort to improve processes and maintain Canadians' confidence and trust as they continue to deliver on their important mandate.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Auditor General and the procurement ombud along with their respective teams. They undertook a tremendous project to dig deep into the complex procurement activities as it unfolded for the development of the ArriveCAN app. Their efforts are not wasted, as they are shedding light on an important issue that has a widespread impact across government. Both have pointed to significant gaps and shortcomings in the procurement processes, record keeping, roles and controls at the CBSA. The agency has assured the government that these recommendations, as set out in both reports, will serve as goal posts to addressing the gaps and concerns raised.

The CBSA has accepted all the recommendations and has already started implementing action plans in response to the recommendations set out in the reports. These plans reflect the work of the CBSA that it has already undertaken to date and the work it will be doing moving forward to ensure that all of its procurement actions are aligned with policies and processes, that the CBSA continues to operate transparently, that it has stronger regard for the value for money when outsourcing work and that all employees operate in a manner consistent with the CBSA code of conduct and public sector values and ethics.

Most notably, the CBSA has so far created the executive procurement review committee to approve contracts and task authorizations. This is providing more oversight on the contracting activities. Second, it will require employees to disclose interactions with potential vendors, which will increase transparency. Third, the CBSA has increased the capacity of its procurement group both to oversee procurement activities and establish a centre of expertise. It will act as a single window to help employees if they have questions or do not understand their authorities and obligations.

These examples are just a starting point of the CBSA, which continues to implement the action plans in response to the Auditor General's recommendations.

The CBSA recognizes that maintaining the trust of Canadians is paramount and will endeavour to do so by improving its internal management and ensuring that public policies are followed. Canadians deserve to have trust in their institutions and in the public service.

The CBSA is working with Public Services and Procurement Canada to improve its procurement practices to ensure strengthened controls, oversight and stewardship over contracting. So far, these discussions have led to its new procurement improvement plan. The

agency already started to strengthen its processes and controls related to procurement planning, contract administration, corporate culture and proactive monitoring to reduce the risk of fraud, and more is to be done.

The CBSA is responding quickly to move forward in the right direction. One of the steps taken involved launching an internal audit of all contracting at the agency. It has also increased its oversight over the issuing of contracts and task authorizations. The CBSA is also now requiring employees with contracting authority to retake procurement certification courses.

Although these are simple steps, they will certainly improve the stewardship of contract administration within the agency, while still providing critical services to Canadians across the country.

I would like to use my time to also address concerns that have been raised around the value-for-money aspect of ArriveCAN, with the acknowledgement that the gaps in policies and controls existed in the procurement process. We do have to remember that the paper system was slow and costly and was not meeting the information requirements of public health officials. While we cannot disregard the very legitimate concerns raised in the Auditor General and procurement ombud reports over these allegations, there are still some positive aspects of the ArriveCAN app.

● (1055)

Last week, the AG appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and said that she does not think the value should be quantified. She acknowledged that there was some value in digitizing the old paper system at the border. The OAG's 2021 report on border measures covered this as well. I will quote from the AG's appearance last week.

I would add that there is also an enduring value to this application, as CBSA has now springboarded off what was done here to automate the border, something they had been working on before the pandemic. They used this as a sort of springboard to go there. There is some sort of enduring value left, post its use during the pandemic.

On this side of the aisle, we can agree that things could have unfolded a lot better. I do note that the pandemic context is an incredible management challenge, but this is absolutely no excuse to throw policy and procedure out the window. What we have learned in that regard is unacceptable, and I am glad to see that CBSA is taking that very seriously.

Business of Supply

Across government, departments were called upon to be fast and flexible in providing services to Canadians, but this bias to action should not have come at the price of sound stewardship. Then, as now, public servants need to remain focused on documenting decisions and taking care of basic management fundamentals.

I can report that the CBSA has already made changes to address this, and we will take further action to ensure management practices are aligned with policies and deliver value for money going forward.

In order to avoid restrictive requests for proposals, the agency's new executive procurement review committee will look at the mandatory criteria in contracts to ensure that they are not overly restrictive. In addition, contracts above \$1 million need to be approved by the CBSA's executive committee to ensure they do not undermine the fairness and openness of the bid solicitation process.

The CBSA is reinforcing government spending requirements and has already curbed its use of management consultants. The CBSA will continue to adjust our procurement governance and supporting documents so that they act as a quality control process to ensure mandatory criteria are not overly restrictive and do not undermine the fairness and openness of the bid solicitation process.

A culture change in procurement is happening and is necessary. I think that all members can agree that federal procurement is difficult to understand, but we can all understand that it needs to be done properly.

Again, we would like to thank the Auditor General and the procurement ombud for their work. These reports, along with the work of various standing committee studies on this matter mean that Canadians can rest assured that procurement in Canada is being examined and the results should be a positive net gain for taxpayers as we think of what kind of work we outsource and how.

I have acknowledged that we need to get to the bottom of what happened in this case, and we can also ensure that we tighten procedures to prevent the procurement process from any wrongdoing in the future. I think all parliamentarians should be concerned about the details of this situation.

However, after listening to several speeches already in this House today, I do question the sincerity of the Conservative Party, which will say anything to grab power. Their actions do not actually match the tough talk that they often speak in this place. With my remaining time, I would like to demonstrate to Canadians that while we are deeply committed to fixing the procurement process, the tough talk of Conservative members in this place is all talk and not actually based in reality. I think Canadians need to get a picture of how deep this procurement issue goes.

In questions, my hon. colleagues have raised the fact that GC Strategies, which is at the heart of this issue, went by a different name previously, or merged from, Coredal Systems Consulting Inc.. With the remainder of my time, I would like to read into the record all of the contracts issued by the previous Conservative government using this very same company that it now claims to be Liberal insiders.

• (1100)

They include the following: April 1, 2015, total value over \$541,000 for technology consultants; March 3, 2014, over \$2.3 million for consultants and a programmer-analyst for Transport Canada while the Leader of the Opposition served as parliamentary secretary; March 26, 2013, over \$1.8 million for Transport Canada; November 28, 2012, over \$287,000 for management consulting; October 29, 2012, over \$968,000 for telecom consultants; October 17, 2012, over \$140,000 for other professional services not elsewhere specified; October 17, 2012, over \$233,000 for other professional services not elsewhere specified; March 29, 2012, over \$213,000 for management consulting; March 1, 2012, \$675,000 for information technology consultants; August 9, 2011, over \$24,000 for training consultants.

It continues: July 29, 2011, over \$24,000 for a sole-source contract for IT consultants at the same company that the Conservatives claim does not do any IT work as I am reading out all of the IT contracts that they approved; July 29, 2011, over \$24,000 for sole-source contracts for Transport Canada; May 24, 2011, over \$129,000 for Public Works and Government Services, for a procurement tool; and October 26, 2010, over \$21,000 for management consulting at Fisheries and Oceans.

Although this issue is deeply concerning, in regard to what happened here, we can see that the procurement issues are pervasive and it is why this review is absolutely necessary. It is why we committed to doing the work to fix the procurement process to put in better oversight and transparency. However, when Conservatives talk tough, Canadians should know that their actions are very different.

• (1105)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague make some quotes about \$24,000 contracts and \$100,000 contracts. This is a \$20-million middleman contract. It is absurd and it was done with no accountability, no contracts and nothing of any sort to show what the money was for. It was a shovelling of taxpayer money into the pockets of a few chosen so-called IT consultants who are really just middlemen. It is something that is beyond the realm of what Canadians see as acceptable. Would my colleague please address the fact that this needs to be explored; but also explain to the House why her party filibustered, obfuscated and tried to hide this from Canadians for almost two years?

Business of Supply

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, we did no such thing. While the member opposite stands up and defends his party's record, let me just point out again April 1, 2015. While his leader sat around the cabinet table, their government approved \$541,000 in IT, technology and telecommunications consultants for the very same company that the Conservatives are criticizing.

I acknowledge that there is a need to get to the bottom of what happened here and to fix the procurement process, but when Conservatives talk with outrage, we should know that it is very fake, given their record. I would ask for unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, the Coredal-Conservative contracts in this House so the members opposite can see just how much money they spent.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would call for a bit more decorum in the House.

First, I think it is important to say that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting this motion as a matter of principle. The leader of the Bloc Québécois was the first to call for an independent inquiry, the implementation of a reimbursement procedure and oversight of the agency. The leader of the official opposition is merely blowing smoke by saying that his party reacted when it saw the \$12 million.

I am sorry, but the truth is that no one on this side of the aisle was aware of this before the Auditor General's report. The proof is that the only time ArriveCAN found its way into an appropriation bill is in a note to the supplementary estimates (C) for 2021-22, on which we voted at the end of the year, in March 2022, in the form of Bill C-15. If the Conservatives noticed this when we studied the supplementary estimates (C) for 2021-22, why did they not oppose any of the appropriations? If they had, we should have voted on this appropriation in particular. Instead, all the parties voted in favour. The Conservatives are blowing smoke, but this kind of thing should never happen again.

What I want to know from my colleague is whether her government will finally call an independent inquiry so that we can see all of the ramifications in connection with these two cronies.

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that all parliamentarians should be very concerned about what we have learned. I thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this.

We do support the ongoing investigations. There are several, in terms of the Auditor General. There is now the Information Commissioner, who we also support. The CBSA has acknowledged that it will work with them.

As I said in my speech, we do want to get to the bottom of what happened here. The agency has already put in place a number of measures to improve the procurement process but it is also very open and willing, based on the further investigations that happen and based on the further work of the House and the committee, to implement recommendations that will ensure that this does not happen again.

I acknowledge my hon. colleague pointing out the smoke and mirrors from the Conservatives, because they raise no such issue except when they think it benefits them politically, except, again, as I pointed out in my speech, those in glass houses, given their history with this very company.

• (1110)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while we are hearing Conservatives and Liberals fight over who started with which highly paid consultant and who spent more, we actually need to get to fixing the problem and have that conversation. This is just the tip of the iceberg, in terms of what is going on at CBSA and ArriveCAN. This is not just deeply concerning, as my colleague talked about. This is outrageous.

We saw Deloitte go from \$11 million in outsourcing in 2015 to \$275 million, PricewaterhouseCoopers from \$20 million to \$115 million, and KPMG from \$3.9 million to \$48 million. It has gone up 546%.

It doubled under the Conservatives. It has skyrocketed under the Liberals. This is on top of layers and layers of commissions that these big firms are taking, including GC Strategies.

They talk about cutting outsourcing by 15%. It will put them at only 464% above when they started in 2015.

When are we going to see a full investigation, broadening beyond the ArriveCAN app, which includes all of the big six and all of the outsourcing?

When are they actually going to demonstrate that they have a plan to cut the outsourcing and put those services and those jobs back through the public service, so that taxpayers are not paying these lucrative, highly-paid consultants tons of profits on the taxpayers' dime?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I mentioned in my speech that the CBSA has already put in place conditions to cancel or no longer move forward with management consultants. There is more work to be done, based on the results of some of the work done in multiple reports.

I also want to point out that one of the things highlighted by the AG was the fact that the CBSA routinely approved and paid invoices that contained little or no details of the work completed. This is a very serious issue, an issue that, again, the Conservatives seem outraged about, yet they themselves did the same with the very same companies.

Business of Supply

To my hon. colleague's question, this is why CBSA has also initiated a full review of CBSA procurement practices. It is because we want to make sure, as I said in my speech, that Canadians see value for money and that there is transparency in the system. This is not something that just happened overnight, but we are committed to fixing it and giving that assurance to Canadians.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that unanimous consent was not given to table these very important documents, which are very revealing of how the previous government managed things. I am also shocked by the obvious cozy relationship that existed between the previous Conservative government and this firm, and the very lax contracting policies that left us documents with words such as “work unspecified”.

Does the member not feel that perhaps this cozy relationship and these lax practices might have emboldened GC Strategies going forward?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has posed yet another question about this situation. That is why I am happy to see that the CBSA and the commissioner are working with all agencies to look into this. In fact, they have also reported any concerning allegations to the RCMP.

As my hon. colleague raised, this company has a long-standing history with the Government of Canada under the previous Conservative government, so perhaps it became very used to working in this system. I do not know, but I do think it is important that we not only get to the bottom of this and look at what happened here but also, more importantly, fix procurement across the system.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are gathered—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We are restarting the debate with another member, which is an opportunity for that person to present without interruption.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Beauport-Limoilou.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, we are gathered here today to discuss a Conservative Party opposition motion. While we expected to have another of many motions on the carbon tax, which does not apply in Quebec and represents less than 0.15% of inflation, it was a wonderful surprise to see that we were going to talk about something else. Honestly, that feels good.

Today's motion is on the ArriveCAN application, a matter that has been before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates for study since October 22 and for which I have the pleasure of reading every document that we receive. In fact, I have prepared a table of contents, and, so far, these documents represent 27 pages of table of contents. That will give members an idea. What is more, I have not even finished it all yet. I also want to point out that my hon. colleague from Terrebonne, who is also ex-

amining the ArriveCAN app at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, is the next speaker. I will be sharing my time with her.

So far, we have met with 46 witnesses and received two briefs, as well as tens of thousands of pages of documents. Just to give members an idea, the table of contents so far is 27 pages long. Naturally, I have not read it all yet. Reading is one thing, analyzing is another. Connecting each piece of information to form a cohesive and coherent whole will take more than five minutes. It will take more than a 15-second sound bite on social media.

Why introduce this motion today if the subject is being studied in committee? Some of us may be wondering. This is one of the questions I will attempt to answer in my speech by giving an overview of the situation as we understand it so far. I will talk more about what ArriveCAN is and about what has happened since 2022, in other words, about what we have learned.

ArriveCAN is an app that travellers were obliged to use for declaring their vaccination status at customs. The first contracts for ArriveCAN date from 2017, long before the pandemic. The aim of these contracts was to create an app that would facilitate declarations at Canadian customs. The health aspect was added to the app in 2020. That is when everything appears to have started going off the rails.

How much was the app supposed to cost at first? So far, the answer appears to be \$80,000. In 2022, it was to cost around \$250,000, after a team of young programmers copied the app. The team told us in committee that copying an app is much easier than starting from scratch but that, even if they had created it from scratch, applying the security codes and updates, it would not have cost \$54 million, the number that was being bandied about at the time. We are now at a cost of \$59.5 million.

After that, we found out more about ArriveCAN and its cost. Our investigation revealed that consulting firms had been given hefty contracts. What did these consultants do? Essentially, they turned on their computer, accessed LinkedIn to find specialists and listed them along with their daily fees. Incidentally, the consultants invoiced between \$1,000 and \$1,500 a day for specialists.

However, we found out through the ombud that 76% of the people on the list of IT specialists submitted by GC Strategies never worked on the app. Other specialists, who were not on the original list, and with who knows what qualifications, did the work. I hope people are following me. That is essentially what the consulting firms did. At the end of the day, they invoiced 15% to 30% to submit names. In short, 15% to 30% of the daily fees invoiced were for specialists who did not end up working on the app.

Business of Supply

● (1120)

That reminds me. Remember the two guys who set up a company and, within seven days, had a \$237-million contract for 10,000 ventilators? They took that contract and gave it to Baylis Medical, a company owned by a Liberal MP who lost his seat in the 2019 election. If we apply that same percentage, 15%, which is the minimum, that means those two guys pocketed \$40 million seven days after starting their business. That sounds a lot like GC Strategies, but in this case, things started well before the pandemic. Things started in 2015 for GC Strategies and in 2007 for Coredal Systems Consulting.

That is the Canadian dream, being a consultant and having an extraordinary ability to find people on LinkedIn. There are similarities there. People set up a business in their basement, take a quick look around and end up with millions of dollars in their pocket at the end of the day. This is all strangely reminiscent of a system that we need to study, analyze and investigate. GC Strategies is not the first of its kind. Its predecessors include companies such as Coredal Systems Consulting and FTI Professional Grade. This is a big deal. The Auditor General says she has never seen worse record-keeping than in the ArriveCAN books. That is a big deal.

Today's motion is about accountability. Yes, the opposition certainly has a role to play in drawing attention to information like that. However, it is not up to Julie Vignola alone, or the member for Terrebonne or a small research team to sift through tens of thousands of pages to find every item related to ArriveCAN. At some point, accountability is also the government's responsibility. It knows where it invested taxpayers' money.

Speaking of taxes, it would be nice if companies hired by the government did not use tax havens, which may be the case for one company that got millions through the ArriveCAN contract. I would encourage everyone to read today's *La Presse*.

We are being criticized for voting in favour of ArriveCAN. I will point out the estimates in question. ArriveCAN is mentioned in the supplementary estimates (B), 2021-22, on pages 2-2 and 2-82. ArriveCAN is also mentioned in the supplementary estimates (C), 2021-22, on page 1-19.

These budgets were voted on as a block. If we had voted against them, like the Conservative Party members did, we would have been voting against the construction and management of indigenous women's shelters, against financial support for festivals and tourism, against community revitalization, against financial support for mental health and against support for Afghan nationals, support that the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles was screaming for in the House. We also would have been voting against the procurement of PPE.

There is a problem. We agree with the motion, but we also need to put the CBSA under third-party management, because whistleblowers have been warning of serious problems for quite some time, particularly regarding passports, and members of both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party have turned a blind eye to these problems. It is time to put this agency under administrative supervision. We will vote yes, but we need to go even further.

● (1125)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague and for the work that the Bloc Québécois does on matters of finance, because we both think that it is important to manage the public purse wisely.

I am afraid that the aspersions she is casting on Frank Baylis, a former Liberal MP, are not correct at all. Mr. Baylis chose not to run in the 2019 election.

His company was created by his mother, a new Canadian who arrived from the Caribbean Islands in the 1940s. She was a nurse and she started this company to distribute medical products. Today, it is worth billions of dollars. Mr. Baylis did not need to get contracts. He helped someone in the sector, a Conservative donor, who wanted to help by providing ventilators.

I would like my colleague to apologize for what she said about the hon. former member.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I did not name the member, I simply named the company.

Second, I did not lie because FTI Professional Grade Inc. did indeed receive a contract seven days after the company was created. It then transferred that contract to Baylis Medical. Seven days after it was created, that company, FTI, received a \$237-million contract for which we can assume there was a 15% to 30% commission.

So I did not make anything up. All one needs to do is follow the paper trail in the newspapers as well as the budgets and contracts allocated during the pandemic.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from Quebec, but I have other comments and questions about other companies that received a lot of grants and contracts from the Liberal government during the pandemic.

In my opinion and that of my colleagues, the Liberals hid behind the pandemic to hand out a lot of money to their friends.

Is the member aware of the other contracts like the one that went to Medicago? What has been happening with Medicago from the time the contract was awarded until now?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic started, we might recall that, in terms of vaccine procurement, the federal government put all its eggs in one basket. It reached an agreement with the Chinese government, but the agreement fell through. We were left in the lurch, with no access to vaccines.

Then the Government of Canada decided to diversify its potential pool of vaccine producers, including Medicago, but not without some risk. Some producers, not just Medicago, failed to deliver vaccines for various reasons and, unfortunately, the Government of Canada lost its deposit payment. Following a decision by Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma, Medicago no longer exists. A decision was made.

Business of Supply

Yes, we lost money, but it could have easily turned out in our favour. There was a race to be the first to manufacture vaccines and get access to the market.

● (1130)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was on the committee that looked into the spending. We looked at Baylis Medical. We looked at Palantir. We looked at WE Charity. We found no evidence on Baylis. There were certainly many questions about WE, but the question about the spending on ArriveCAN, to me, is a question of a lack of oversight. The \$59 million could have been spent on 32 different contractors.

Where was the accountability? Even in the midst of a pandemic, when we were trying to get money out the door to get tools that could help, this is an issue of a fundamental failure of oversight, and I think that is the question we need to focus on.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, unless we keep our eyes on the big picture, spending can easily get out of control. That is true for individuals, and even truer for governments.

We are dealing with a situation where the government not only lost sight of the big picture, but also seems to have spent recklessly without making any checks at all. The problem also relates to problems the agency has been having for a number of years.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, nearly two weeks ago, the Auditor General released a scathing report regarding the government's handling of the ArriveCAN app. The Auditor General said that the management of the app was one of the worst examples she has seen in her career.

Now we are learning that the ArriveCAN file is just the tip of the iceberg. The purpose of the app was for people to register travel with the CBSA in the context of COVID-19. The app was supposed to cost \$80,000. Another company said it would have cost about \$250,000 to develop. We are talking about an app that cost only \$12 million in France for a population of 70 million people. I could name other examples where this app cost far less in other countries. Unfortunately, in Canada, it cost nearly \$60 million.

I mentioned the tip of the iceberg. The fact is, the Auditor General and her team could not even put an exact figure on the cost of the app. That is where the problem starts. That is the crux of the problem. It has to do with a procurement process that was completely disregarded. The Auditor General and the procurement ombud have come forward with some pretty serious allegations that Public Services and Procurement Canada and other departments simply did not follow what is supposed to be an exemplary procurement process worthy of a G7 country.

Here are a few examples. The average daily cost for this app was about \$1,090, whereas it is usually around \$675 for IT positions.

We already know that the companies that billed their services to the government billed nearly double what it should normally cost. Here are other examples.

In roughly 76% of applicable contracts, the human resources detailed in the winning bid did not do any work. In other words, huge contracts were signed that included resources who, at the end of the day, never did any work. We have an entire department that is supposed to do its job when it comes to the procurement process and is supposed to have processes that work and are followed. In both cases, that work was not done.

Here is another example: 18% of the invoices submitted by contractors that were audited by the Auditor General were not supported by adequate documentation to determine whether they were related to ArriveCAN. That is why, from the outset, I said that they did not even know how much ArriveCAN cost. It is inherently problematic. There is such a lack of documentation that one might think we were in a third world country. Having audited procurement processes in developing countries myself, I think that they have better procurement processes than we do. It is shameful.

There is a second level to this. Serious misconduct is suspected. In her report, the Auditor General indicated that she noted situations in which Canada Border Services Agency employees who were part of the ArriveCAN project had been invited to dinners and other activities by suppliers. There is no evidence that the perks that these public servants received were reported to their superior as they should have been.

That is something that we do as parliamentarians. If we receive a gift, we report it. We are closely scrutinized, and that is how it should be. Obviously, the top priority of public servants is to serve the public. Public servants know that, when they accept their position, they must serve the public to the best of their abilities. As a result, they must report any appearance of a conflict of interest. That is essential when a person enters the public service.

There has been a lot of talk about GC Strategies. Let us not forget that GC Strategies was known as Coredal Systems Consulting back in the Conservatives' day, and it too received contracts. However, we have also heard about another company called Dalian. According to what we learned this morning, the owner of Dalian—another company that received millions of dollars for the ArriveCAN app—has bank accounts in tax havens. No surprise there. Receiving that much money but providing little or no service certainly raises questions about misconduct. That is where things stand now. We must let the RCMP do their job.

We also know that the owners of GC Strategies have numbered companies. I just wanted to share that. Numbered companies allow for a lot of leeway. Again, we will let law enforcement agencies investigate that. There are some serious questions about misconduct here.

One thing is certain, companies like Dalian and GC Strategies had contracts under the Conservatives. Whether we are talking about GC Strategies or Coredal Systems Consulting, these companies had contracts. However, there is another thing. The contracts with these consultants, these two companies in particular, simply skyrocketed starting in 2017. The increase started in 2016 or 2017. Companies such as Dalian received hundreds of contracts from the federal government. Where did the federal government, the Liberal government, lose complete control of its public service, its public servants, its departments? Was it a lack of leadership? Was it recklessness? That is what we are trying to understand in this story. Again, ArriveCAN is just the tip of the iceberg.

The number of contracts awarded on a non-competitive basis has also skyrocketed. Under this government, the problem is systemic. Expertise is being lost. On the one hand, we have the Conservatives. During their reign, they eliminated positions, cut public services, reduced the number of public servants and hobbled public servants' and departments' internal expertise. On the other, we have a Liberal government and its slew of middle managers. Many of those jobs were cut. They may no longer have the internal expertise, but they want to do development. They are zooming around all over the place trying to do development. They end up relying on external consultants like Dalian and GC Strategies to do the work that the government should be doing. The number of these contracts is growing by leaps and bounds.

• (1135)

We are not just talking about competitive procurement here. We are talking about the awarding of a huge number of non-competitive contracts. In 2023 alone, 27% of contracts were awarded non-competitively. Do members know in which department that happened? It was at Public Services and Procurement Canada, the department that is supposed to set the example and that is supposed to have processes and ensure that they are followed.

Such was not the case since 27% of the contracts awarded by Public Services and Procurement Canada were awarded non-competitively. How then can we guarantee that the government is providing proper services for every dollar spent? Let us remember that we are talking about taxpayers' money. Perhaps some people are so far up their ivory tower that they forget that they are managing taxpayers' money. What is more, when contracts are awarded non-competitively, there is no guarantee that they will be effective or managed properly. We see that Public Services and Procurement Canada did not even follow up on those contracts, and it is not the only one. The CBSA also has a lot to account for. I have given examples of poorly monitored procurement and talked about how serious misconduct is suspected. Basically ArriveCAN is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Bloc Québécois will support this motion. However, as my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou said, this motion may not go far enough. Our leader was the first to call for a public inquiry. The Canada Border Services Agency may be the worst, but we do not need to look far to see that quite a few problems exist elsewhere. Perhaps it should be put under administrative supervision. In any case, a lot more needs to be done to get to the bottom of this, because there really is a widespread problem. We saw it with the spending on McKinsey. Ultimately, McKinsey was not necessarily

Business of Supply

the problem. The Liberal government may have lost full control of the departments, leading it to become dependent on consulting firms to the point where it has now lost all control. Part of the blame lies with the Conservative government's irresponsible actions, including cuts to the public service, which created a need for outside expertise.

To conclude, Quebeckers can see that they will have an irresponsible government if the Conservatives come to power. They also see that the Liberals are an irresponsible government that is incapable of managing its departments. Fortunately, we have other options in Quebec. We have the best option, which is to leave and govern ourselves, because, strangely enough, we do not hear of many cases like ArriveCAN in Quebec. In fact, Quebec's app cost a fairly reasonable amount, about \$10 million, which is not the case for Canada's app. I would like to end on that note and on the fact that, in Quebec, we are far better at managing our own affairs. If we have to choose between the plague and cholera, we prefer our country, by far.

• (1140)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. At the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, she provided a very good summary of what we heard from the Auditor General of Canada. I think she would agree that this work is very important and that the work of the Office of the Auditor General absolutely has to remain independent.

My colleague pointed out that the Conservatives made deep cuts to the public service and that there is a lack of expertise. Does she agree that we should increase the size of the public service, with all that that might entail, or is there room for consultants? I believe my colleague herself has worked with consultants in her distinguished career.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. This gives me a chance to say that the Liberals have already considerably increased the size of the public service. Although they increased the size of the public service, they ended up with essentially operational positions responsible for managing the consultants.

All the expenses to get expertise have gone up. Often the work is duplicated. Sometimes consultants are hired to do the work that an entire team could do internally. We see inefficiencies everywhere. The problem is more widespread. We need to consolidate the public service and finally provide better services to the public.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. In her speech, our Liberal colleague talked about the contract awarded to GC Strategies, a company formed in 2015. We have heard that this company had a number of contracts with the Government of Canada before that. However, the company did not exist before 2015. What does that mean?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for throwing me such a softball, so to speak, since it is really quite simple.

Business of Supply

The two people who founded GC Strategies had already founded a company called Coredal Systems Consulting. That company has had contracts with the Canadian government since 2007, so under the Conservatives. In 2015, they dissolved Coredal and transitioned that company into GC Strategies. That information is very easy to find on the open government website. It was a typical name change that just happened to coincide with a change in government.

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that what is happening with ArriveCAN and at CBSA is just the tip of the iceberg.

At the government operations committee, I put forward a motion to expand the study to include the big six highly paid consulting firms. When I put forward that motion, members should have seen the room. Everybody in the corporate control parties ran to their phones, saying to hold on. They were checking in with their friends at the big corporations, including, I am sure, the managing directors at Deloitte, who are both former cabinet ministers from the Liberal Party and from the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives delayed the vote on the motion not once, not for two meetings, but for three meetings. They finally got confirmation and a go-ahead from their corporate-controlled headquarters at Deloitte that they could support the motion. We knew that the Conservatives would never allow that study to happen and to be expanded.

Does the Bloc agree that we need a full investigation that goes well beyond what is going on at CBSA and with the ArriveCAN app and that we need to look at all the outsourcing, especially since it has gone up 546% over the last eight years and has doubled under the Conservatives? We need to get to the bottom of it, and fix this problem.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do agree because we want to get to the bottom of the matter.

A committee could look at everything that has been done with large companies, but the members would drown in the sea of hundreds of thousands of pages of contracts that we do not necessarily have the training to understand. We need to call for a public inquiry. We need outside people who are trained to do this kind of work to come in and get to the bottom of the story.

As I mentioned, and as my colleague said, ArriveCAN is just the tip of the iceberg. We do not know where taxpayers' money is going, and that is shameful.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

The question of how public money is spent or misspent is a fundamental question of an obligation for parliamentarians, because the Canadian people do not need to pay attention to everything that happens in Parliament. However, they need to know that there is

accountability and that we respect their hard-working money being spent properly and through the right channels.

I have many years of experience in the House dealing with all the smut and corruption files that have come along. I was elected in my first year as the Liberal government was telling us that Jean Chrétien's golf balls were going to keep the country together. Fortunately, the Canadian people did not believe that. That was the first scandal I witnessed. I have lost track of all the scandals.

We can take misspending and put it into various categories. There are simply the tawdry ones, like with Bev Oda, who seemed to rack up as many bills as possible every time she travelled until people finally became fed up. There was the issue with Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright, where Mike Duffy was claiming all kinds of outrageous claims because he was a bagman and raised money for the Conservatives. We were presented with this bizarre case that it was okay to offer a secret bribe, but it was a problem to receive the bribe.

Those scandals did not just belong to the Conservatives. There was Mac Harb, a Liberal, who had this amazing grifter scheme. He was not eligible for travel, so he bought this dodgy little broken down cottage just 100 kilometres outside of Ottawa because if he lived 100 kilometres outside of Ottawa, he could hit up the taxpayer for all kinds of travel, even though, I was told, there was not even running water at that cottage. Mac Harb had to pay back \$231,000.

People deserve to be outraged by that abuse, and it raised questions in the Senate of where the accountability is to make sure that the people who are there are doing their jobs. I remember Tony Clement and the \$50 million that was taken out of border funds so that he could buy sunken boats and build a fake lake in Muskoka. That was an abusive process. It was not criminal; it was an abusive process.

There was the issue with Arthur Porter, which was one of the more concerning scandals I have witnessed over the years. Stephen Harper appointed him as head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and made him a privy councillor. We then, of course, found out he was involved in what CBC said was “the biggest fraud investigation in Canadian history”, and he ended up dying in Panama in a jail.

Those are elements of criminality, “griftership”, tawdriness and of people just misusing the public funds.

The ArriveCAN thing needs to be put in perspective of the time, and then analyze it from there. When we were hit with the pandemic, we were dealing with a completely unknown crisis that none of us had faced, and there was certainly a need to get a response out the door quickly.

Who did the best job at that? It was our public servants. They basically spent that Easter weekend in 2020 creating a program to get the CERB dollars out to people who were not able to work and to keep them going. It was the Public Service who did good, amazing work during that time.

However, there were a number of scandals that came up during that period, and ArriveCAN fits into that because it is a question of the lack of oversight and accountability. Certainly, Canadians deserve to know how a contract worth \$59.5 million, divided up through 32 companies, for a program that did not work was allowed to go ahead. We ask ourselves how that was possible.

I would like to share with my colleagues some of the recommendations that came out of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, which looked into some of the other elements. We looked at Baylis Medical, at Palantir and at the Kielberger brothers. At the time, again, the government wanted to get a youth program out. There was \$500 million to \$940 million set aside for the Kielberger operation without competition and without very clear oversight. What the committee found was that the incredible access Marc and Craig Kielberger had into the inner workings of government gave them an advantage no one else had.

I would encourage any of my colleagues to read the Ethics Commissioner report on the former finance minister, Bill Morneau. It makes for a pretty shocking reading that these guys had an all-access pass into the corridors of the Liberal government and were not even registered to lobby. That certainly was a major factor in bringing down Mr. Morneau.

• (1150)

I want to raise this because if we have these scandals, we need to learn from them. We need to learn how money was misspent. We need to learn why there was no oversight, so that this is not repeated. Otherwise we become a laughingstock of repetition of failure from insiders, from misuse of public funds and from contracting out.

With respect to the contracting out that was to be done with the WE group, I am going to read what the all-party committee said. This is not my opinion but that of all of the political parties that participated. It reported this back to Parliament:

The Committee was unable to find any due diligence reports that actually tested the credibility of the claims made by the WE Charity. This group had never undertaken a project close to this magnitude and it remains unclear whether they had the means to ensure that students across the country could be put to work with credible results.

It was going to be given \$500 million initially, and there were no due diligence reports that we could find anywhere. Then we found out that the money was going to be funnelled to a shell company initially set up to deal with some of its incredible real estate holdings. How is it possible that the Government of Canada would transfer between \$500 million and \$940 million to a shell company? Who was taking the enormous risk then? It was the Canadian people. I am going to read from the all-party committee report again:

The Committee is of the view that the decision of the Liberal government of Canada to sign a contract worth over \$500 million with a shell company “WE Charity Foundation” is deeply troubling. The WE group stated they used the shell company to limit their liability. In reality, this procedure had the potential to put a huge investment of taxpayers funds at risk because the deal was with a shell company with no assets.

How does a G7 country sign on to something that concerning?

I am raising this because of the whole thing about ArriveCAN and the Auditor General's not being able to find anything on how

Business of Supply

the money was spent. One of the most disturbing factors is that after 10 months of study, we had to report to Parliament that we had no idea how the finances of the supposed children's charity worked. We could not tell the Canadian people who controlled its multitude of corporations. We did not even know all the companies that it controlled. We could not tell the difference between its so-called charity work and its for-profit work, or tell what its ownership structure was, yet the government, without doing due diligence, was going to sign over between \$500 million and \$940 million.

The report states:

The Committee notes that over the 10 months of its study, it was unable to get a clear picture of the financial structure of the WE group. We were unable to ascertain a clear division between how monies flowed through the charitable wing and their for-profit operations. We were also denied information on the ownership structure of their multitude of side companies. If the government of Canada is to sign future contracts or contribution agreements with WE Charity, its affiliates or subsidiaries, such clarifications must be required.

I raise that because we are looking at a very similar thing that happened with ArriveCAN. Where was the oversight?

This is the other question I am going to end on. We spent 10 months trying to get the CFO of WE to testify, just to tell us what was happening. We were told not only that he was on medical leave but also that he had a brain aneurism that, if we asked him questions, might cause his death. Certainly nobody in Parliament was going to wish that someone die under the pressure, but the WE group could not come up with anybody else who could explain its very complex financial structure.

On May 15, 2021, we received a letter from Mr. Li saying that he was too sick, had not been doing any work and was completely uninvolved, yet we found that in that period, in the state of California, there was a registration renewal in November 2020 on which he signed off as CFO. There was a New York state filing on which he signed off as CFO, an Internal Revenue Service report in 2020 and a Washington State report. All of these were signed off on by Victor Li, yet our committee was told that he was so fragile and sick that he could not even read documents. We were not in a position to do a criminal investigation, but we had to report back to Parliament that there had been a major failure of fundamental accountability.

Has the government learned lessons from what happened with the WE brothers, or do we have to repeat these tawdry, dumbed-down abuses of public funds because the accountability mechanisms that should have been there were ignored and the Canadian taxpayer is on the hook? I will be here all week.

Business of Supply

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for me there are a couple of issues, and I will very quickly break it down. There is the procurement process, but there is also, from my perspective and what I think my constituents would be saying to me, the question of how one company gets into a position in which it could do what GC Strategies actually was able to do.

Part of it is that we have to look at the origins of the company, which had actually been around for many years; it was under a new name, of course, as it had been under Coredal. I wonder whether the member could provide his thoughts on that aspect. To what degree should we be looking at how a company could surface and get into a situation like we find ourselves in today?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I think the member should be asking the minister in charge of the file how the heck that happened.

The issue is that the government is giving out enormous sums of money to groups like McKinsey, which has a very dodgy record on everything from opioids to articles in the United States saying that this is the company that destroyed the American middle class. Nonetheless, we give them millions of dollars even though we have a trained civil service that is dedicated and can do the job.

I cannot imagine that ArriveCAN would have gotten off the ground as far as it did if we had mechanisms in place. However, I want to be fair. I do not have a problem that the government tried to get ArriveCAN, and I do not have a problem that it tried to bring in people to get it done, because we were in unprecedented circumstances. My problem is where the heck was the oversight once it began to realize that this thing was not going to work?

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. Of the many speeches he has given in the House, that is the one I liked the most. I will even accept his criticism of previous governments, because Canadians want to see transparency in the way their dollars are spent, including with every government that sits in the House.

However, I would ask the member about what happened during the pandemic and all the contracts that were given out. The government was dealing with a lot of its insider friends, and more or less said, "Let's not let a good crisis go to waste. Let's set up corporations to get a whole bunch of money out the door." Hundreds of billions of dollars were spent by the government in unaccountable ways. We have only scratched the surface here, and every time we land on something, it takes two years to actually show some transparency, because of committee obfuscation, delays, etc.

I ask the member whether he would actually step up and tell his party, in light of another \$50-million scandal, which is five times what the Jean Chrétien scandal was that brought down his government, that he would consider withdrawing his support for the obviously corrupt government.

• (1200)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, if I were to go back to Timmins—James Bay and say, "Hey, guess what, the Liberals screwed up again, and this time it is ArriveCAN, so we are not going to go

ahead with national dental care and we are not going to go ahead with pharmacare", I would get laughed out of the room.

My focus is that we are going to force the government to deliver on things that are absolutely making it twist in the wind, thanks to a few percentage points over the Liberals in the polls right now, as they never would have come to the table on national pharmacare.

On these scandals, the Canadian public expects us to go beyond synthetic outrage to say, "What happened?" and "How was that money spent?". As I said earlier, I was part of the investigation into Baylis Medical. I did not find anything that was problematic. If I had, I would have said so, but I did not. However, with the WE group we found major problems. We found major problems with ArriveCAN. As my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, said, we need to scratch the surface on all contracting now, because there is an amazing amount of taxpayers' money that is being misspent through this process.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree, at least within the opposition parties, that this is a real mess.

As we have said, we will unequivocally support the Conservative motion.

That said, I would like to ask my colleague if he would agree that the Conservative leader has been rather quiet about the fact that, while he was parliamentary secretary to the transportation minister, his department awarded \$6.5 million to the owners of GC Strategies.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question.

I have a lot of questions about the Conservative leader's positions. For example, to me, his decision to vote against supporting Ukraine was unacceptable.

The leader of the Conservative Party claims to be the leader of accountability, except when it comes to connections to lobbyists. With the Conservatives, it is an open bar for lobbyists.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise in support of this motion today.

I am going to speak to the broader issue of outsourcing and what New Democrats have been trying to do from the beginning in terms of revealing and bringing an end to the rampant outsourcing to highly paid, external, for-profit consulting firms that are making money hand over fist. Earlier I talked about how, under the former Conservative government, we saw the number of highly paid consultants double. Under the Liberal government it has gone up 546% to the big corporations, to the six highly paid consultant firms.

Business of Supply

What we want to do is stop these profits and the economic leakage happening in our country, and bring that work back to the public service. We saw the Conservatives with their Phoenix pay system that was supposed to save taxpayers \$80 million. It has cost us over \$3.5 billion. Talk about a failure. I find it laughable when Conservatives are up in the polls and they want to force an election. They want us to go from one corporate-controlled party to another. That is not good enough. What we need to do is actually fix the problem.

There is waste worth billions of dollars. It hurts the public service. It also hurts the morale in the public service when it sees a company like GC Strategies, which is two guys who do not have an office or staff but probably have two bar stools at a local bar dedicated to them, getting \$59 million in government contracts. What we learned at government operations committee is that they get a commission between 15% and 30%; let us call it 20%. These two guys made \$11 million just in commissions. Neither of them is an IT specialist. They are headhunters. This is easily a job that should be brought in-house and not done by external consultants.

We know that ArriveCAN is just the tip of the iceberg. We heard the parliamentary secretary say that this is deeply concerning. It is not just deeply concerning; it is absolutely outrageous, and it needs to end.

I want to compare the over \$21 billion in outsourcing, and by the way, the Liberal government wants to make us feel good by cutting 15% of outsourcing. It has gone up 546%, but the Liberals are going to cut it by 15%. Does that gives everybody at home a lot of comfort? I do not think so. Let us think about what the \$21 billion in outsourcing could have done for building hospitals or schools, or providing a pharmacare plan that is going to cost \$10 billion or a guaranteed livable income for seniors and people living on disability, the most marginalized people in our society.

With ArriveCAN, we saw what was an \$80,000 app skyrocket out of control. As my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay cited, money needed to be spent in terms of the emergency response to COVID. We absolutely support that, but not the outrageous runaway train. We put forward motions and ideas. We tried to actually look at the outsourcing procurement problem. We put forward a motion at the government operations committee to ask the Auditor General to look not just at ArriveCAN but also at all outsourcing and buy-and-sell decisions by the Government of Canada.

Initially the Conservatives were hesitant to support my motion, but they did. Then they took the motion and brought it to the House on an opposition day to call on the Auditor General to look at ArriveCAN. However, we need to go bigger than that. I supported that and am glad I could work with the Conservatives on it.

Let us face it: The Conservatives gutted the public service. This is when outsourcing started. Michael Wernick, the former Privy Council chair, showed up at the government operations committee. He cited that it was cuts in leadership and training that led to the start of the outsourcing that happened under the former Conservative government. Those were critical, huge cuts. They were very costly, as we can see now as the government goes to outside consultants to provide that leadership. I will talk a little about that.

We put a question on the Order Paper to look at the government's spending on outsourcing consultants. One instance we found was that Natural Resources Canada spent over \$600,000 to advise the government on how to cut outside consultants. It used an outside consultant to give it advice to cut outside consultants. One cannot make this stuff up; it is that outrageous. This is what we are seeing.

● (1205)

Let us talk about the history of outside consulting and the need to invest in public servants. We saw the previous Conservative government privatize the Phoenix pay system that was brought in. It was supposed to save \$80 million a year. It has actually cost us \$3.5 billion. The ArriveCAN scandal pales in comparison to what has happened with the Phoenix pay system.

What we keep seeing are continued sole-sourcing structures of outsourcing, which ensure that companies like GC Strategies are the only ones that can properly bid. We heard at committee about GC Strategies actually altering résumés to help companies qualify and get task authorizations. These are security clearances that are pretty critical and important to the safety of our country. We are also concerned about how they misused indigenous set-asides. They hired a company on an indigenous set-aside that was not indigenous. The owners of that company were embarrassed when they found out, because they believe in reconciliation. They believe that money that is dedicated for indigenous procurement should go to indigenous companies.

We want to get to the bottom of this. We talked about outsourcing doubling under the previous Conservative government. It has more than quadrupled under the current government. We are literally seeing the corporate-controlled parties let the foxes run the hen-house. Today we see the Liberals and Conservatives fighting over who hired whom, who started the whole mess with consulting, who spent more on the same consultants. It is a big problem.

Business of Supply

What we need to do is to stop the layering of commissions. We need to take action and solve this problem. There should not be a layering of commissions. We learned that GC Strategies got a contract and then subbed it out to another contractor, who subbed it out again. We saw cases in which Dalian and Coradix, another two-person outfit that was making millions of dollars, subbed out to GC Strategies, which then subbed out to somebody else. They took commissions along the way. We heard from the deputy minister that there is no limit on commissions. We could see that commissions could be 60% to 70% of a bid. This is an economic leakage that is out of control, and it is a self-perpetuating cycle in terms of outsourcing that reduces public service capacity.

I want to say that that layering is like the biggest pyramid scheme I have ever seen. Someone gets a contract, subs it out and takes a cut. Then they sub it out to the next person. They are all friends. These companies with two staff and no offices are something that seems to be coming up, and that was just with CBSA. We need to look beyond. We wanted to look at Deloitte, for example. It went from receiving \$11 million in contracts in 2015 to \$275 million. We wanted to look at PricewaterhouseCoopers, which went from \$20 million to \$115 million. This is just since 2015.

I put forward a motion to expand the outsourcing study to include the big six. Madam Speaker, you should have seen the room when I put forward that motion. Everybody ran to their phones. The corporate-controlled parties were checking in with their head offices, making sure it was okay to support this motion, and they delayed it.

They delayed the vote on it, and then the Conservatives decided to delay it one more time. It took three meetings before they supported it. The reason they supported it was that they knew that it would never see the floor. We are close to the anniversary of expanding that motion, and we have not gotten to the bigger study. I find it kind of odd, given that a former Liberal cabinet minister, Pierre Pettigrew, is a managing director at Deloitte, and a former leadership contender in the Conservative Party, Peter MacKay, is a managing director at Deloitte. No kidding that they do not want to study it and put it under the microscope, and they do not want the Auditor General taking a look and doing a deep dive. These big corporations are just like the smaller ones, like GC Strategies. They get the bid, sub it out and take a cut. They are not doing a lot of the work.

We want to fix this. We will keep fighting for that. We want to put a cap on commissions. We want integrity in procurement, and that includes making sure that all bids are competitive, instead of this sole-sourced business. We want to end and prevent the misconduct that is taking place. We want to stop our public dollars from turning into private profits. In terms of looking at indigenous set-asides, they actually need to go to businesses that are indigenous-owned and indigenous-operated and delivering services.

The New Democrats are here to actually bring solutions and try to fix this problem, so that we can get the support to Canadians who are struggling right now.

• (1210)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we do keep records of who voted for what during budget

deliberations, so I would ask this member how he can go back to his riding, when he voted eight times to ensure that GC Strategies got tens of millions of dollars. He talks about the corporate parties. He literally is propping up the Liberal government to ensure the ad scam continues. GC Strategies is still getting money because of his vote. It is actually quite embarrassing.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, what is embarrassing is that I just outlined that the Conservatives are making sure that we are not putting their former—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the hon. member that he had an opportunity to ask a question. He should not be talking when he is trying to get the answer. If he has other questions and comments, he needs to wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, as I was going to say, what is embarrassing is that the Conservatives continue to protect their friends at Deloitte, including their former leadership candidate, Peter MacKay, and, just like the Liberals, they do not want to talk about it. They are both corporate-controlled parties.

They are trying to mislead us again. Those votes were about allocating \$4.6 billion for COVID rapid tests and vaccines. They were about millions of dollars for a national child care program and funding for affordable homes and women's shelters.

It is no surprise that the Conservatives voted against those things, because that is what Conservatives do. They cut and gut the services people rely on.

We will not take any lessons from the Conservatives, who gave over \$7 million in contracts to the former owners of GC Strategies. They also created the Phoenix disaster, which was supposed to save taxpayers \$80 million but cost us \$3.5 billion.

We have been fighting since the beginning to get to the bottom of the ArriveCAN scandal and to reduce the use of wealthy private consultants. We will not stop, and not just on ArriveCAN and not just on CBSA.

Business of Supply

We need to look at the whole of government. We need an investigation into all of the outsourcing, something that is being blocked by the Conservatives, a Conservative-led committee, a Conservative chair who will not allow this motion to come back so that we can look at the whole picture. They do not want to look there.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just very briefly, the outsourcing issue is something that governments both present and past, at the national level and at the provincial level, have actually been involved in. All political parties participate in it. I suspect that one would even find New Democratic administrations that have outsourced to Deloitte and Touche, just so that is on the record. The amounts might vary, obviously.

If we take a look at everything that has been done on ArriveCAN, a number of standing committees have been investigating it and thousands of pieces of information have been provided; we have had departments internally and we have had independent offices of Parliament looking at it.

I am wondering if the member feels that there is still a need to continue to try to create more information on the file.

• (1215)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, we need a mechanism and tool to do a full investigation. Right now, the Conservatives are focused on ArriveCAN because it is a “gotcha” campaign. They are not actually trying to fix the overall problem with outsourcing.

My colleague talked about an increase in outsourcing, but like I said, Deloitte went from \$11 million in 2015 to \$275 million, and I can assure my colleague that there is no New Democrat government in this country that has seen such an outrageous increase. This is not just deeply concerning, like the Liberals call it. This is outrageous, out-of-control spending on highly paid consultants. It is an economic leakage, work that should be done by the public service, and money that could be spent supporting people who are struggling right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are seeing yet another big mess coming out of the cross-party consensus within the Ottawa coalition, as I like to call it. It is the fact that Ottawa keeps delegating important aspects of policy decisions and government decisions to big companies, some of which, like McKinsey, have fingers in many pies.

In this case, a company with only two employees was entrusted with the task despite a 40% increase in the federal public service. It is a cross-party consensus because, although this is currently a Liberal scandal, we might say that it really started when the member for Carleton was parliamentary secretary for the Department of Transport from 2011 to 2013. His department awarded \$6.5 million to the owners of GC Strategies, the company involved in the ArriveCAN affair. It was called something else at the time.

Does my colleague not think that the Conservative leader is staying pretty quiet on this?

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I will say it. They are hypocrites. Let us face it. Conservatives started the outsourcing and the out-of-control situation that we are in. They cut public service. They outsourced IT. They started the Phoenix debacle that was supposed to save \$80 million but cost us \$3.5 billion. It is absolutely outrageous.

What we are trying to do, and I will say that we have been working really well with the Bloc, is actually fix the problem, but we are being blocked by the corporate-controlled parties from conducting a full investigation and examination of this outrageous outsourcing to highly paid for-profit consultants.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe the member just called the Conservatives hypocrites. I wonder if he would like to retract that, because, by his own words—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. The hon. member did not attack an individual member. He spoke about the party as a whole.

I do want to remind members to please be mindful. It is causing a bit of a disturbance when individuals use adjectives that cause disorder, but the point the hon. member raised is a point of debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for New Brunswick Southwest.

The arrive scam boondoggle has rightly put the government's mismanagement of taxpayer dollars in the spotlight. At one point everyone in the government wanted to be associated with the ArriveCAN app, touting it as one of the greatest things a government had ever accomplished. Now, with the Auditor General's report, nobody wants to take accountability for this mess, and it is no wonder.

As we have discovered, we have an application that started out with a price tag of \$80,000 that ballooned to \$60 million and counting. It now appears, according to the Auditor General, that we will never know the true cost of this application, given the lack of information available for her to do a proper audit. We can add to this the procurement ombud's report that found that 76% of all resources proposed by the contractors to do the work in fact did not. Finally, a two-person company that did no actual IT work was paid almost \$20 million.

Liberal politicians who once championed the app are now backing away from it, pointing the finger at the public service, while senior public servants are all pointing their fingers at each other.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives introduced the study of ArriveCAN in committee, we knew that there was more to the story than what the government was telling. That is why we introduced a motion in this place calling for the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit, including of the payments, contracts and subcontracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app. The audit confirmed our suspicions and went even further.

Just last week, we heard testimony in committee from two former CBSA employees, who have been suspended without pay even though they now work in different departments. These two former employees were highly critical of the actions of senior bureaucrats at CBSA, including the president, who they allege was attempting to mislead the committee and withhold information.

When parliamentarians are confronted with evidence of reprisals and allegations of misconduct and an active cover-up, we cannot trust the Prime Minister's department to investigate itself. We know how these investigations end: Liberal insiders get off easy while others take the fall. We saw this clearly in the SNC-Lavalin case. SNC-Lavalin got off with a slap on the wrist, but Jody Wilson-Raybould was removed from cabinet and caucus, all for standing up for the rule of law on behalf of Canadians.

The Prime Minister is not interested in upholding the rule of law; he is interested in removing blame from himself and his buddies, pinning the blame on others and punishing them harshly.

Our study on ArriveCAN has uncovered large-scale misconduct across multiple government departments. The procurement ombud found widespread disregard for the rules of procurement by the Canada Border Services Agency, Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Auditor General referred to the glaring lack of documentation as the worst she had ever seen. In her report and in testimony before committee, she stated several times that the pandemic was not an excuse for the lack of documentation and glaring mismanagement across the ArriveCAN contracts.

This glaring mismanagement is completely unacceptable, especially when taxpayers are on the hook for tens of millions of dollars. This boondoggle has led to Canadians overpaying for an app that sent thousands of Canadians unjustly into quarantine.

The Auditor General also confirmed at committee that the lack of documentation pointed to two possibilities: the first being that the documents never existed in the first place and that the government just was not doing its job in keeping track of taxpayer dollars; and the second being that the documents had been destroyed.

While this second possibility may seem far-fetched, it has been reported in the media that an IT employee at the CBSA has claimed that the former vice president and chief information officer of the CBSA deleted four years' worth of emails. This is extremely troubling and is outrageous, as one of my colleagues said.

• (1220)

One of the Prime Minister's top bureaucrats has been accused of deleting four years' worth of emails from his time at the CBSA, particularly during the time of the ArriveCAN procurement. Now

this bureaucrat, who has since been promoted to chief technology officer of Canada, is refusing to provide answers.

It is alarming to the Conservatives that senior members of the government's bureaucracy are being accused of lying to and misleading parliamentarians in committees and refusing to answer our questions. In addition to this, we have had to deal with constant Liberal filibustering at committee. The persistence of the Liberals to stall our study of the arrive scam makes us wonder what they have to hide.

The mismanagement of ArriveCAN is indicative of the way the NDP-Liberal government has been running the country over the last eight years. It has wasted taxpayer dollars, increasing its deficits to new heights each year. It has created a cost-of-living crisis, making it difficult for Canadians to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. It has failed to deliver for Canadians on every level, yet the Liberals refuse to take any responsibility for their failed policies and eight years of failed governance. However, Canadians know who is responsible.

While the cost of living continues to go up and the quality of life continues to go down for Canadians, the Liberals are afraid to face Canadians with what they have done to our country, and the New Democrats have simply lost their way. The NDP, once called the workers' party, has bargained away its responsibility as an opposition party and is now more focused on blindly supporting the Liberals than on stopping the damage it is inflicting on working-class Canadians. While it supports the disastrous overspending of the government, allowing it to do whatever it wants, the NDP's only demand is that the Liberals spend more.

With the emerging scandal around the arrive scam, the New Democrats have been feigning outrage at the Liberal government, but, as has been noted by the Leader of the Opposition, they voted in favour of the arrive scam eight times. The New Democrats had their chance to stand against it, but did not. Now they are pretending to be shocked by all the money spent on the app.

The NDP presents itself as an opposition party, but this act is falling apart. Despite the New Democrats' best efforts to put on a show of holding the government to account, their actions are clear to all Canadians. By continuing to prop up the Liberals year after year, they have intertwined themselves with the Liberals so tightly that it is difficult to tell them apart. Canadians are not fooled by their faux outrage at their coalition partners. If they truly believe in their record, they will stop propping up the Liberal government and its failed policies, and allow Canadians to decide who they want to lead them forward.

It is important to remember that in the midst of the pandemic, the Prime Minister called an election in a thinly disguised last-ditch effort to recapture a majority government. Failing that, he was then able to fall back on his good friend, the leader of the NDP, to give him the majority he so desperately needed. Canadians do not support the coalition government; they want change. Canadians want answers for the arrive scam. Canadians want to end this cover-up coalition.

In the face of the corrupt NDP-Liberal coalition, the Conservatives will continue to fight for accountability and against a waste of taxpayer dollars. After all, that is why we are also calling on the government to collect and recover all monies paid to ArriveCAN contractors and subcontractors who did not work on the ArriveCAN app, within 100 days of the adoption of this motion. We are also calling on the Prime Minister to table a report in the House showing that public funds have been reimbursed. This is the ultimate accountability that the government can demonstrate.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are two issues. There is the issue of the procurement process, and I will get into that. Quite frankly, my constituents would be very much concerned about how a company would be able to get these types of contracts and they would ultimately question the real value of those contracts.

One way we can find out is to look at where this company comes from. This company was not just created in the last few years; it has been around for a number of years. It was created under Stephen Harper. This is a company where the board received contracts, many contracts, under the Stephen Harper government. Would the member not agree that we should get a better sense in terms of—

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not know how to say this loud enough. The member is misleading the House. This company was created in 2015. Its incorporation date is 2015, shortly after the Liberal government was elected.

• (1230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is a point of debate. I know the hon. member—

Mr. Greg McLean: No, it is not, Madam Speaker. It is a point of very significant relevance. The member is misleading the House and I would like a ruling on it, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On the same point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to try to relieve some tension on the other side, the member should look up Coredal Systems Consulting, which is virtually the same company, the same two individuals. That is what we are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Although members may not agree on the facts, it is a point of debate, as I had ruled initially before I was challenged. I would ask members to please wait until it is time for questions and comments.

I do not know if the hon. parliamentary secretary wants to finish his question. I know the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek is able to answer. There were a lot of individuals trying to

Business of Supply

speak while the hon. parliamentary secretary was asking his question. I know members making speeches are very capable of answering questions, and that is when the interjections should happen.

There is another point of order by the hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, the member just admitted that it was a company that is similar to but not the same.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, this is a point of debate. I would ask members to please quote the section on points of order they are referencing in order for us to ensure they are actual points of order.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre is again rising on a point of order.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, the point is that the member is misleading the House. If the company did not exist before—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, it is a disagreement about the facts. It is not a point of order; it is a point of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary can finish his question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member if she would agree to give me leave to table the document that shows the individuals involved here are the same individuals that were involved in numerous contracts that were issued under Stephen Harper. Will she agree to give me unanimous consent to table the document?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, the member well knows that requires the unanimous consent of everyone in this place.

The fact that he is misleading the House is simply to cover up the fact that under the Liberal government outsourcing has absolutely skyrocketed, even though, in 2015, it campaigned on the promise of reducing the use of consultants. Spending on outsourcing has increased by almost 50% under the Liberal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the motion before us today, which was championed by the last Conservative member who spoke, states that the government should produce all the documents, all the reports, so that we can get to the bottom of this. We think it needs to go a step further.

Would she not agree, given all the allegations of misconduct at the CBSA, that it should immediately be put under administrative supervision and that we should turn to an independent external investigation?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, it is important to remember that the Auditor General stated in her report that this was the worst she had ever seen when it came to glaring mismanagement, the lack of documentation and, ultimately, undermining value for money for Canadians.

Business of Supply

I sat in on all the meetings on the study on ArriveCAN. It has been extremely difficult to get access to documents. This is something the Conservatives are committed to doing, which is why we have put forward this opposition day motion.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy when the Liberals and the Conservatives have a contest over who the worst managers in government are. It is quite ironic that the Conservatives are so focused on this one instance of misspending, when they were the government that brought in the Phoenix pay system. They estimated that would cost \$310 million, and it has now cost more than \$2.6 billion.

My question to the member refers to something she said in her speech about how our confidence and supply agreement with the Liberals does not benefit working people. Does she not support the dental care plan that we started? Is she opposed to the pharmacare plan we just received agreement on? Does she oppose the anti-replacement worker legislation? Does she not think those programs benefit working people in this country?

• (1235)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I have to believe that it smarts a little to know that one's value in this place has been bargained away simply to prop up the failed Liberal government.

We want to talk about standing up for Canadians, rather than their hunger for power. They should be standing up for Canadians and supporting us in bringing accountability to this place when it comes to wasteful spending, which they continue to claim they oppose.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, as chairman of the public accounts committee, I have the responsibility for coordinating the oversight of how federal programs and departments are managed by the Liberal government. Every day brings more evidence that the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is just not up to the job.

Since my appointment as chair two years ago, I have to admit that not a month has gone by without the committee examining evidence from Canada's Auditor General that demonstrates ongoing mismanagement of taxpayer dollars and the abdication of any responsibility by Liberal ministers to improve performance or outcomes. I can report that even the Auditor General is becoming exasperated with a government that promises to do better, while little changes in report after report.

It is outrageous that taxpayers are being forced to bankroll the Liberal government's incompetence. The waste we discover is not an accident. It is the best the Liberals can do. On this side of the House, we believe that Canadians deserve better. Never has a federal government spent so much to achieve so little. After eight years, Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption, and he needs to be replaced.

In contrast, Conservatives would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budgets and stop the crime. Liberals call this a meaningless slogan, but it is our mission statement for a principled and accountable common-sense Conservative government. Each point speaks to a promise that would reverse the decline the Liberal government

has brought to Canada, which has left millions of Canadians worried and worse off, sometimes desperately so.

Today, the House of Commons is considering three important points, raised by the member for Carleton, concerning government spending and oversight. The leader of the official opposition, along with other Conservative members on this side of the House, wants to know how much the Liberal government spent on the ArriveCAN boondoggle, whether the responsible ministers will be held accountable for the budget failures, and whether the millions of wasted and unearned tax dollars will be returned to the Treasury.

The Auditor General reported that ArriveCAN was originally projected to cost \$80,000, but it ballooned to at least \$60 million. That is 750 times the original price. The key words from the Auditor here are "at least" because, as our Auditor General, Ms. Hogan, said in her value for money audit, it is "impossible to determine the actual cost of the application."

For every MP and taxpayer to understand the severity of the mismanagement and waste, the Auditor General added, "This is probably some of the worst financial record-keeping that I've seen". She also said, "Overall, this audit shows a glaring disregard for basic management and contracting practices throughout ArriveCAN's development and implementation."

It was lacking basic management and proper record-keeping, and there was no ministerial or departmental oversight. In other words, it is a bloody financial train wreck. That is the result of investigation number one from the federal government's own Auditor General.

The second investigation, done by the procurement ombudsman, revealed that, in a staggering 76% of ArriveCAN contracts, the contractor did not perform any work. I will note that that ombudsman will be at the public accounts committee this afternoon. We look forward to hearing about those findings and how taxpayers did not receive value for money. Apparently some contractors received money for no work. The investigation also revealed that a two-person company, GC Strategies, which did no IT work, was the only supplier in North America that could win some big government contracts because of bid rigging. This is from the ombudsman.

We will go back to the Auditor General, who reported, "We found that GC Strategies was involved in the development of the requirements that the Canada Border Services Agency ultimately included in the request for proposal." This finding has not been addressed enough. The Auditor General is saying that GC Strategies was at the table when departmental officials were setting up the contract terms, meaning that it not only had the inside advantage, but also wrote the rules.

• (1240)

GC Strategies is a two-person consulting firm that does no IT work. It bids on federal government contracting schemes and then outsources the work to others. When GC successfully wins a bid, all it does is subcontract out that work to other contractors. There is little to no value in these arrangements, except for the owners, because the bidder charges and pockets a fat commission, of up to 30%.

Since 2015, this two-person consulting firm has collected over \$250 million from taxpayers, according to reports by *La Presse* newspaper. In 2022, consultants such as GC Strategies were awarded \$17.7 billion in contracts while ordinary Canadians struggled to pay for groceries and heat their homes.

Now, a third investigation has begun by the Information Commissioner into ArriveCAN. This one focuses on allegations of deleted emails by federal officials responsible for overseeing the ArriveCAN program. This is a concern the Auditor General has not dismissed and one that needs to be investigated.

Then to wrap all of this up, this taxpayer-funded mess, the RCMP is investigating it all. I believe evidence was heard at the public accounts committee indicating that the police should expand its scope after testimony from officials that reinforced that contracts were fraudulently submitted by contractors, work was not done at the value the taxpayer expected and that this needed to be looked at for fraud.

How did the ArriveCAN waste happen? Well, public servants did not follow the rules. A Liberal government that is not able to manage the bureaucracy or protect tax dollars was in place. Consultants swindled the system and, in some cases, broke the law. If we listen to testimony from public servants who appeared before the public accounts committee, there is a trend of excuses: “I wasn’t there” and “I don’t know what happened.” We heard that public servants did not sign off on these contracts and that their predecessors had either been moved to another department or are now retired. We also heard that they just did not know. No deputy minister has been fired, and no minister has been held accountable, yet bonuses were paid, which are bonuses for outsourcing work that the public service was responsible for doing in-house.

Three years ago, Conservatives called on the Prime Minister to end ArriveCAN. Instead of listening to common sense, these Liberals went ahead and wasted tens of millions of dollars. In the Auditor General’s report, it clearly shows that the majority of spending on the ArriveCAN happened after the 2021 election.

The truth is, this is a scandal that could only happen under the Liberal government. For those who have been around this place long enough, and in many cases even longer, ArriveCAN combines the worst of two previous Liberal scandals: the ad scam and the long-gun registry.

In the ad scam, tax money was paid to Liberal consultants without records for little or no work. Does that sound familiar? Nearly \$1.2 billion in sponsorship and advertising contracts were received by government outsiders through sole-source contracts.

Business of Supply

Taxpayers would remember when former auditor general Sheila Fraser was unable to calculate the long-gun registry price tag because expenditures were not saved by the government. The filing cabinet was empty. At the time, she estimated the total cost at over \$1 billion. Members will remember that, under a previous Liberal government, that program was supposed to cost \$2 million, yet it was up, up and away, just like the arrive scam.

In conclusion, I will go back to ArriveCAN and the Auditor General’s report, which reads, “In our view, flaws in the competitive processes to award further ArriveCAN contracts raised significant concerns that the process did not result in the best value for money.” That is the Auditor General saying that it was a financial train wreck, and it is another failure of this tired, wasteful Liberal government.

Who on that side of the House is accountable for this waste? Who will be accountable to Canadians?

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the question I asked the member’s colleague. Many of my constituents want a better understanding of how the two same people were able to get themselves into a position where they could ultimately do what they did, with very questionable behaviour. It goes all the way back to when they were directors for CoreDal; they actually received numerous contracts under the Conservatives.

Would the member agree that, for this particular company, we should actually be looking at its origins and how it ultimately developed? To support that, would he agree that we should be tabling the document that clearly demonstrates the grants received by the company at that time?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, next the member is going to be blaming youth crime on individuals who were born during the Harper era. This is a Liberal scandal. Liberals have had eight years to reform and manage the public service as they saw fit.

Those questions need to be directed to the government. How was a company able to fleece taxpayers, under its watch, of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars? That is a question for you. If you cannot ask it, voters will get you out of the way.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I assume the hon. member was not addressing that directly to me; he should ask his questions through me.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Montcalm.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois has called for an independent public inquiry. He called for the money to be returned and for the CBSA to be placed under administrative supervision. He has said that right from the start.

Business of Supply

My colleague, quite rightly, tells us that this is an outrageous scandal. We are going to vote in favour of the motion.

On the other hand, if, even before the Auditor General's report came out, the Conservatives knew that there was a problematic sum of \$12 million in the supplementary estimates (C), 2021-22, which were voted on in March 2022, why did they not ask for a separate vote? Why did they not object to us voting on the whole thing as a group? Why did they not voice their concern right away?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, again, a few days ago, the Conservative leader mentioned that the Bloc and the NDP voted with the federal government to support ArriveCAN.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Why did you not denounce it?

Mr. John Williamson: For three years now, we have been saying—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the people who asked the question to wait for the appropriate time if they want to ask another question, to give the hon. member the chance to answer the question without having a debate directly between members of the House.

The hon. member.

• (1250)

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I said myself three years ago that we needed to put an end to ArriveCAN and that it did not make sense. Now we are seeing that it was very costly.

It is not up to me to explain how the Bloc Québécois, the NPD or the Liberal Party votes. We are going to ask why they voted to support this program.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member is the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Does the committee have any plans to investigate accountability for the Phoenix pay system? It was planned by the Conservatives to cost \$310 million and now has cost more than \$2.6 billion, with more than 200,000 public servants still facing problems with their pay. Is the committee going to investigate that Conservative boondoggle?

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, that is up to the committee members. If my hon. colleague would like to urge his member to seek support to do that, it is something we can consider. Generally, our committee follows the reports from the Auditor General, so I would not decide this on my own. If the Auditor General studies it, we will take it up. Again, today is about ArriveCAN, a program that has not worked, as well as the support the NDP has given that program and the great waste to taxpayers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by emphasizing that every dollar the government spends is important, and the government, in all ways and in every way possible, tries to ensure that there is a high sense of accountability and transparency for it. That is something we have seen virtually from day one when this issue was first brought to light, and I want to amplify that and make it very clear.

The Government of Canada and the Prime Minister have been clear on this. We will ensure that there is a sense of true accountability on this issue, because every tax dollar spent is important. We have taken this very seriously, virtually from day one, in terms of the things the government needs to do in order to be able to support Canadians.

We have to put this issue in its proper context. This was at a time in which we had a worldwide pandemic going on; government expenditures started to increase dramatically. This was because the Prime Minister and the government decided to have the backs of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, in every region of this country. This meant that we had to create programs from virtually nowhere, such as the CERB program, which literally put thousands of dollars in the pockets of millions of Canadians at a time when we needed to be there for Canadians.

The government developed programs to support small businesses. Whether it was by providing the wage subsidy and loan initiative programs, coming up with the financial resources to be able to protect Canadians, providing indirect support through ideas such as ArriveCAN or ultimately providing supports for mental health, other long-term health care and so forth in a wide area of departments with different responsibilities, we took those initiatives seriously. We will continue to push for accountability for those monies that were, in fact, being spent.

However, today's debate is really nothing more than a Conservative stunt. I would challenge the Conservatives, in terms of asking why they are taking this whole cut, paste and post mentality on social media to mislead Canadians on important issues.

There is no doubt that procurement has always been an issue, even when I was an MLA in the Manitoba legislature. There is no surprise there. We have to ensure that there is more accountability in the ways in which the government acquires the things it requires.

If we want examples, we can go back to other federal governments, whether Liberal or Conservative. If we go to the provincial levels, we will find the same thing.

When something such as ArriveCAN comes up, what is important is how the government reacts. We have seen not one, but several ministers engage, in one form or another, with addressing the issue of the tax dollar and how it might have been abused. We believe that it has been abused.

That is the reason we are seeing the types of statements coming from the government: We want to protect the tax dollars and the integrity of the system. However, that is not the agenda of the Conservative Party. All one needed to do was listen to what the Conservative leader had to say when he opened the debate on the issue. He even admitted it when I posed the question about the importance of bumper stickers, because he went with his top four bumper stickers. He then went into ArriveCAN and bragged about how he is going to make sure his bumper stickers are all over the place.

Business of Supply

● (1255)

Every bumper sticker that the leader of the Conservative Party puts out is an attempt to mislead Canadians, because Conservatives tend to think Canadians are stupid. It is really quite unfortunate. That is what today is about. It is a stunt being brought forward in order to generate some scenario so they can somehow tag the government with the word “corrupt” with respect to this issue; in fact, the government has been on top of it virtually from day one.

When I raised the issue in the form of questions and when I heard the parliamentary secretary talk about the company, one thing that came to mind is that there are really two issues here.

There is the issue of procurement and how it works. We have a professional civil service that, I would argue, is second to no other in the world. At times, mistakes happen, but it is about how the government responds when they take place. At the end of the day, that is one of the issues that I think is important for us to talk about.

The other issue is related to the two-person company itself. If we listen to what the members opposite say at committee, and here on the floor of the House, we often hear the comment “Liberal insiders” or “government insiders”. We hear that these two people were made wealthy because they were insiders. That is a bunch of hogwash. These individuals are the very same ones who received contracts when Stephen Harper was prime minister. The company had a different name; it was called Coredal Systems Consulting Inc., but two people from that company are the same two people as in GC Strategies Inc. They are one and the same.

Therefore, I would say to Conservatives that, as the second part, maybe we should look at how a company gets into a position where it can ultimately do what GC Strategies has done. To me, that is an important issue that I would like to provide answers for to my constituents. When I said that earlier, it upset a few Conservatives; it does not fit within their stunts. At the end of the day, they do not want real accountability. Why? It is because the two individuals in question are not Liberal or government insiders any more than they were when Stephen Harper was the prime minister.

When we look at it, we really begin to understand why the Conservatives do not want me to table the document. The parliamentary secretary to the minister attempted to table it earlier. I am going to attempt to table it now. If we look at the origins of the company, Coredal Systems Consulting Inc., and some of the contracts, I know why they do not want us to table it. It is because the leader of the Conservative Party was in government. He was a parliamentary secretary. Members would not believe the number of grants that were issued when he was in charge of the department. Is it any wonder that Conservatives do not want us to table the document or want Canadians to know? We would not know that by their behaviour, but the reality is that we are talking about a number of contracts.

Let me cite a couple of them. There is a contract dated May 26, 2013. We all know the important role the leader of the Conservative Party played back then. In fact, he was the parliamentary secretary for transport. Guess what? This contract was issued by the parliamentary secretary for Transport Canada, and Transport Canada issued a contract to Coredal Systems.

● (1300)

Coredal Systems is the very same thing as GC Strategies. That one was worth well over \$1 million.

They then received another one here for \$287,000, again, Transport Canada. I do not know if I should emphasize that the leader of the Conservative Party was also the one responsible in that case too. There are several of them, so let us make the assumption that the ones I am going to be referencing are all contracts for which the leader of the Conservative Party was responsible. We had another one from October 29, 2012. That one was just under a million, \$968,000.

Then, if we continue on, I am just going to list off the ones in which the leader of the Conservative Party had a role to play, such as March 29, 2012, well over \$200,000, again, Transport Canada. Here is one for well over half a million dollars, March 1, 2012, again, Transport Canada. There is another one on August 9, 2011, going to Transport Canada. Here is another one, July 29, 2011, again, all going to Coredal Systems.

An hon. member: How much?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservative member is asking how much they were. That member does not quite get it. It is the principle of this.

At the end of the day, we are talking about the very same company. I am sure that if the member opposite consulted with his constituents, he would find a high level of interest as to how it is that a company can create itself and then receive substantial government contracts through the years, into a worldwide pandemic where there was a great deal of money being spent to protect the interests of Canadians. It would appear that there was substantial abuse.

When I say substantial, I cannot underestimate the potential of how the taxpayer was being taken advantage of. That is why it does not matter what side of the House one sits on. I am concerned about it, as are my colleagues, as is the Prime Minister, as are the ministers responsible.

That is why, when we found out about the initiative, we did not just sit back and try to hide it; far from it. We initiated a number of studies into what had taken place. As I say, this is an example of the government needing to take action to ensure the integrity of the system. I am concerned about the system.

I like to think that, whether it is the national procurement process or provincial, territorial, or any other form of tax dollars that are used during procurement processes, there is integrity in the system. That is why we have had not one but several standing committees looking into this issue and not one but several independent offices of Parliament looking into this issue. That is why we have more than one department looking into this issue. There are literally tens of thousands of pages scattered all over the place on this issue.

Business of Supply

To try to give the impression, the false impression, that the government does not take this seriously is absolute balderdash. This government understands the true value of every dollar we receive, because we understand that by using tax dollars in an appropriate fashion, we are able to provide the programming that Canadians want and expect of the government.

● (1305)

We have seen ample demonstrations of that over the years. During the pandemic we created the CERB program and the small business programs. Postpandemic we introduced the grocery rebate and investments in housing, infrastructure and non-profit groups. We hear about the pharmacare program, a program I have been advocating for since 2012 through petitions and other means. There is also the dental program.

We understand the true value of social programs and that is why we put a high value on accountability on tax dollars because we want to support Canadians through these social programs. I commented at the beginning that the Conservatives are more concerned about bumper stickers. We saw that today.

The leader of the Conservative Party has virtually mandated every Conservative who stands up to recite something. I wrote it down. I guess I should know it by memory by now because all of them like to say it. It is the bumper sticker sale going on, on the other side. They have to say, “cut taxes”. That is a must. That is their big bumper sticker. This is what the leader of the Conservative Party was saying when introducing the motion today. In case some people may be wondering about the relevance, I am actually quoting what the leader of the Conservative Party said today in his speech.

He said he would cut taxes, but what he does not tell Canadians is that he would cut rebates. When he cuts rebates, he is literally taking money out of the pockets of the residents of Winnipeg North, over 80% of them. I can say the residents of Winnipeg North are very much the working class of Canada. It is very reflective of ridings across Canada. He is taking more money out of their pockets, but would that stop him from using that bumper sticker? No.

The other talking point or bumper sticker that he made reference to earlier was that he would build more houses. Canadians need to know he was the minister of housing and he was a total disaster when it came to housing. He did not do anything on housing. For the first time in 50 years, we have a national government that is investing in housing. No government in the last 50 years has invested more money in housing than this government, nor worked with other jurisdictions. We are building tens of thousands of new homes over the next number of years. I will compare housing any day.

He talks about the issue of fixing the budget. Fixing the budget is code for a hidden Conservative, Tory agenda. It is the far right, the MAGA Conservatives, coming out. That is what that is all about. Someone made reference to the Phoenix disaster. When we first came into government, what did we experience? The Conservative Party had just cut hundreds of civil servant jobs. It said it was going to save millions of dollars and create this Phoenix project. That Phoenix project ended up costing taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, going into billions of dollars; an absolute waste.

Of course, the Conservatives talk about their final point, which is to stop crime. We came up with a bail reform bill with consensus across Canada from all different political parties. What do the Conservatives across the way do? They filibuster. That is how they are going to stop crime. Initially, they are not. The Conservatives are the ones who actually held it up. The Conservative Party is all about stunts. Today is a giant stunt. Everything they do and say is ultimately for one goal and that is for the vote, and that is it.

On the other hand, we will continue to work day in, day out to support Canadians prepandemic, postpandemic and during the pandemic. There are many things I could talk about. Thanks for the opportunity.

● (1310)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I must say how offended I am by this member's speech when he says that this is a stunt today. We can try to win a debate by using partisan rhetoric, but the purpose of the debate today is to recognize that a horrible thing happened and we want to prevent it in the future.

We look back to arrive scam and how it started in 2021 during the election, and we see it was used to say to Canadians that unvaccinated Canadians were a danger to vaccinated Canadians. It was the demonization of millions of Canadians. In the summer of 2021, we knew of the Delta variant and the Omicron, and that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people could get and spread the disease. Our own public officials from the Public Health Agency of Canada did not have the science to support the policy, so the government initiated a study with a guy named David Fisman at the University of Toronto. This study was so bad that there is a book called *Fisman's Fraud: The Rise of Canadian Hate Science*.

I just want to know how much money the Liberals spent on these studies to support this arrive scam when they knew that they did not have the science to even support it from day one.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the MAGA Conservative far right is coming out. These are the ones who still deny the pandemic. At the end of the day, thank goodness Canadians and the majority of the people in the House saw the value of protecting the health and well-being of Canadians and that the far right was marginalized back then. As a direct result, more people are living today, in Canada. As a direct result, a lot more people were healthier during that process.

However, in the spirit of co-operation because the member wants co-operation. I have a wonderful document that clearly demonstrates—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will ask the member not to point to the document, as he is doing. I am going to go to another question and comment. If the member wishes to table a document, he can rise in the House and propose a motion.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hear the Liberals continue to talk about the surge from COVID. The reality is that the Liberals had \$8.4 billion in outsourcing the first year they were in government that they inherited from the Conservatives. Now they are at \$21.4 billion. In terms of the big six consulting firms, the government had \$119 million, pre-COVID; now it is \$470 million just to the big six.

The argument about a surge from COVID no longer holds water. I will tell members what it is like in my riding. In the Comox Valley, the maintenance of search and rescue helicopters flown by Canadian Forces members has been contracted out to a private company, IMP Aerospace. It is seeing substantial staff shortages due to the low wages paid by the company, resulting in concerns for safety by the public. DND is not ensuring that the contractor is following through with the terms of the contract.

Will my colleague ensure that when it comes to outsourcing and when it comes to public safety on the coast, the government will ensure that those workers are getting paid fairly and that they are being treated properly and there is some actual accountability that is happening?

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that all governments present and past, Liberal and Conservative here in Ottawa have used contracting out, as have all political parties at the provincial level. Even New Democratic governments will contract out consistently. There are varying amounts of money for which they will contract out and there are different sizes of budgets. However, I would like to emphasize that all political parties at different levels of government see the true value of contracting out and at times and in different cycles, such as a worldwide pandemic, recessions or whatever it might be, there is more contracting out done than at other times. I am sure that the Government of Canada, a great supporter of our civil service, will continue to support the civil service the best it can.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): I would like to ask my colleague the following question through you, Madam Speaker.

It is too easy. When it comes to the issue that is before us, the ArriveCAN scandal, it is very easy to make all sorts of accusations about what the Conservatives did, just as the Conservatives are falsely accusing the Bloc Québécois of things. However, that does not absolve the current government of its responsibility for the ArriveCAN scandal.

We are not talking about a small measure. This is causing hours and hours of work in committee. The Auditor General went before the media to publicly explain how unprecedented this is when it

Business of Supply

comes to managing public funds. This is the government's responsibility.

Rather than waiting to be asked questions in question period, what initiative will the government take when it comes to ArriveCAN to ensure that we get to the bottom of the external contracts that were awarded without any accountability or responsibility in terms of public administration?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I pointed out, and will reinforce, that three standing committees have been looking at the ArriveCAN issue. Different internal departments have been looking at it from day one when it was first discovered. There are also at least two, going on three, independent offices of Parliament that investigated it and provided reports. They are looking into the matter on an ongoing basis. The House is deeply engaged on the issue, and we, like me and the member opposite, want answers and will continue to push for answers until we ultimately get the answers we are looking for.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the Conservatives' speeches and behaviour in the House today. I found it interesting because the government has acknowledged that there was a problem, that procurement practices need to be improved and that we need to get to the bottom of this. We have even already implemented solutions to prevent this from happening again. However, the Conservatives do not offer any solutions.

In his speech, my hon. colleague spoke about a stunt. I found it interesting that when I went to Conservative Twitter accounts that spoke about this issue, they were linked to the Conservative Party page to donate.

Should Canadians be concerned about the fact that Conservatives are trying to use this to fundraise instead of protecting transparency for Canadians' dollars?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent point and something I indirectly referred to. I call it "cut, paste and post".

What usually happens with the Conservative Party members, which is why I really appreciate the question, is that they say something in the chamber that is obviously meant to mislead, and edit and paste it in Twitter or social media, and then they post it in order to do data mining. I suggest maybe the Ethics Commissioner should look at the degree to which the Conservative Party is using that as part of its bumper sticker campaign and beyond.

• (1320)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Before I ask my question, I want to recognize Logan Stankoven, who scored his first NHL goal yesterday. I congratulate Logan.

Business of Supply

I find it interesting that the parliamentary secretary talks about the Ethics Commissioner looking into something. I think the Ethics Commissioner is busy enough with the Prime Minister. We have a government that repeatedly breaches ethics, and then it has the audacity to point the finger here. What I love about the member is not what he says but how loud he says it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member says not to look at them. One of the times they were looked at, an individual ended up in handcuffs and went to jail. That was a Conservative member. At the end of the day, we will continue to push for accountability, and the Conservatives will, no doubt, continue with their stunts, unfortunately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member that he had an opportunity to ask a question. Instead of trying to egg on the hon. member, he should be listening to the response.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, \$60 million is the running total so far for the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government's arrive scam. This is a scandal that sees Liberal insiders lining their pockets with tens of millions of dollars while Canadians are lined up at food banks.

I just came from the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics where we heard very interesting testimony from the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The leader of the official opposition sent a letter of complaint to the RCMP about the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's \$60 million arrive scam. The RCMP commissioner confirmed, just minutes ago, that, yes, the Prime Minister's \$60 million arrive scam is under RCMP investigation.

This is a government that has been mired in scandal. This issue, though on its face seems to be business as usual, is shocking to Canadians. It is shocking because one contractor, who worked on the government's failed \$60 million arrive scam received \$20 million, but that is \$20 million out of \$258 million that these two guys, working out of a suburban Ottawa basement, have been pulling in, in contracts. The same two guys admitted under questioning at committee that they fraudulently won the bids.

That was not enough for the government to freeze the awarding of contracts to GC Strategies, just like every single one of the Liberal members voted against having Canada's Auditor General investigate the arrive scam. Why did they vote against it? We learned, when we got the report back from the Auditor General, that it was damning, just like the report from the procurement ombud, revealing that 76% of the contractors, whose résumés were used to win the bids for the \$60 million boondoggle, did not do any work on the ArriveCAN app.

The accountability that the Liberals look to apply to this measure is the same as having the fox guard the henhouse. They want internal processes, the CBSA, to investigate itself. That does a disservice to everyone. In my community, we have frontline border service officers and managers. Those border service officers work tirelessly to keep our country and our communities safe. They are ap-

palled by what they have seen from the Prime Minister's senior bureaucrats, like the former president of the CBSA, in this shocking waste of taxpayers' money.

I did have a parliamentary secretary in this place one day say that it saved tens of thousands of lives. The parliamentary secretary had to walk that back. There was no data. They just make stuff up. Also, under questioning, their officials at committee confirmed the same.

This scandal has seen explosive testimony at committee with allegations of bribery and extortion, and evidence of corruption, forgery, fraud and threats. After we forced meetings last week, including testimony by the Information Commissioner, the Information Commissioner has launched her own investigation into the Prime Minister's and the NDP-Liberal government's \$60-million scandal.

Today's motion is incredibly important because this is going to require the government to report on actual costs. It says something about the complete absence of transparency. The Liberals committed themselves to having the most transparent government in history and having sunshine be the best disinfectant. They need a lot of disinfectant over there because, every step of the way, they have tried to block the answers and the accountability that common-sense Conservatives have pressed for on this massive scandal. We want the actual costs.

● (1325)

Let us break down the name of the Auditor General for a second. She is a general who has an army of auditors, and she could not even get the true costs out of the government because of the paper shredders working overtime every time anyone takes a look at the Liberals and their well-connected friends.

We are going to get all the costs, all the way down the line, and we are going to call on the government to recoup the costs. Last week at committee, senior officials confirmed, when I asked, that there is a mechanism to get Canadians' tax dollars back in this egregious scandal. It is unbelievable that when we have officials lying at committee, when we have clear evidence of criminal acts and when all this evidence continues to pile up, the app was originally billed at a cost of \$80,000.

We will hear the hue and cry that it was never going to cost \$80,000 and that it could not have been built in a day. I have yet to hear testimony, in all the hours, at all the committees looking at this, that \$60 million is good value for money. In fact, the Auditor General confirmed that this was not a value-for-money project, that there was gross mismanagement and that thousands of pages of documents are missing. The government does not know how many documents are missing, just like it does not know the true cost of the app. It is a bit of a problem, and this issue is one that we have been attuned to for more than a year. The government has pushed back on every effort that Conservatives have made on this.

I am pleased that I will be splitting my time to allow for another common-sense Conservative to speak to this egregious scandal.

In spite of the Liberals' protests and their filibuster of a two-day talkathon to try to block the founders of GC Strategies from having to testify at committee, dodging summonses from a parliamentary committee twice, the Liberals, yesterday, voted against the committee motion forcing the founders of GC Strategies to come before the House. They voted against it happening. Again, with common-sense Conservative pressure, we had to give them a mulligan and have a second vote because that member's party voted against accountability and transparency for Canadian tax dollars.

That is egregious, and Canadians are outraged. They are outraged, but they are also hungry and are lined up at food banks in record numbers: two million Canadians in a single month with a third of them being children. They are struggling after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government and its Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. That is what Canadians see under his government.

However, the good news is that it was not like this before, and it will not be like this after. Common-sense Conservatives have a very straightforward plan. It is to axe the tax, to fix the budget, to build the homes and to stop the crime. That is what Canadians deserve after suffering for eight years under a government that has been mired in corruption and scandal for years.

I look forward to putting the question to the House. We will see if Liberals are again going to work with their cover-up coalition to try to block this very important and straightforward accountability measure from passing. Their attempts before have not stopped Conservatives from working for Canadians. That is what we were elected to do. We are going to continue to provide answers and accountability for Canadians, and we are going to get some of their money back.

• (1330)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

It is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, and I was heckled during my question. The hon. member was heckled during his speech, yet on this side of the House we have been called out for it. I would just ask that the other side observe the same decorum and also be called out when they do not obey the Standing Orders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not quite sure what the hon. member is referring to. There was a bit of a discussion or few comments being made here similar to this side. It

Business of Supply

depends on how loud the comments are and if they are disruptive. If it was disruptive, I am sorry I did not catch it. I certainly will be more mindful.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, not one idea was presented with respect to improving procurement. The question I have for the member is this. He posted something on Twitter about this issue, which goes to show just how serious he is. If we click on the link he has provided on Twitter, it then goes to a Conservative fundraising page, which states. "Investigate the ArriveScam boondoggle....Donate."

Does the member use any public dollars at all in regard to his Twitter account? If there is a scam, it is coming from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it sounds like the parliamentary secretary was talking about my Twitter. It is @MikeBarret-ton, if he wants to follow it or if he wants to like that post and share it.

Tens of thousands, and in some cases hundreds of thousands, of people are doing that every day. After eight years of the scandal-plagued NDP-Liberal government and its partnership in the cover-up coalition, Canadians are exhausted. They are also out of cash and pretty soon the Liberal government will be out of time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): During the response, the hon. parliamentary secretary also attempted to intervene, as did others. I want to remind members that when someone has the floor, if others have questions or comments or if they want to contribute to the debate, they should wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is pretty pathetic, as far as debates go. I have been here in the House since this morning, listening to what is going on. Once again, the Liberals are slinging mud at the Conservatives in a bid to bury their own mistakes and their own scandals, and the Conservatives are slinging mud right back at the Liberals.

For us in the Bloc Québécois, they are one and the same. It is six of one and half a dozen of the other. Whether it is one or the other, we face the same problems of wasted public funds.

The Conservatives have been slinging a lot of mud today. When the member for Carleton was the transport minister from 2011 to 2013, he himself awarded a \$6.5-million contract to the owner of GC Strategies, which went by another name at the time. I would like my colleague to tell me how he feels about this morning's revelation.

Business of Supply

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is incredibly disappointing that the Bloc took the opportunity more than a half-dozen times to vote to increase the funding to this scandal-plagued arrive scam app. It is so frustrating for Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet.

When the Conservatives were in government, there was no \$60 million arrive scam. Spending on outside consultants was less than half of what it has ballooned to, at more than \$21 billion under the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

As I said, it was not like that before these Liberals and it will not be like that after them.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, again, under the Conservative government, the outsourcing to highly paid consulting firms doubled. Under the Liberal government, it has gone up fourfold.

The ArriveCAN fiasco is just the tip of the iceberg. We have been calling for the government, and for the government operations committee, to investigate the big six consulting firms.

We saw Deloitte with over \$100 million in contracts just last year. Already this year, it is at \$275 million. Deloitte is run by a former Conservative cabinet minister who is the managing director. We put forward a motion to expand the study to include Deloitte. People should have seen the room. Panic ensued, and the Conservatives delayed voting on it, not once but at three meetings.

Will the Conservatives stop blocking and let an investigation ensue on the big corporations, including Deloitte, or are they going to continue to work with the Liberals in protecting their friends and the highly paid consultants through their corporate-controlled parties?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the cover-up coalition is just that. It has an agreement. The NDP support the Liberal government on all orders of things. In exchange for that, the NDP did not get a seat at the cabinet table, but it does have veto power. The NDP also has the opportunity to not support the Liberal government when it is increasing funding to outside consultants, which is exactly this case. That member voted more than a half-dozen times to increase spending, with \$20 million going to one outside consulting company.

How many public servants could be hired with the tens of millions of dollars that were spent on the arrive scam that went to consultants making 30%, but did no actual work on the app? Dozens. Where was the NDP? It was in lockstep with the scandal-plagued Prime Minister. It is a shame.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to stand in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the people of Calgary Midnapore.

I think everyone has had a situation in his or her life such as going through the grocery store, putting items in the cart, getting to the checkout and having to remove items. Maybe it was a crazy night out. Maybe it was eating too many candies after time with

friends or family. We have all had a situation in our lives where, as we are at with arrive scam today, we have asked ourselves how something even happened.

How this even happened is the big question for today. That is why we, official opposition members, are asking the Liberal government to table a report by March 18 showing the complete costs of arrive scam, and to this date we have no idea what those really are, and to collect and recoup all the funds paid to contractors who did no work. We know there were many, and certainly one in particular. We have this opposition day motion before us today because Canadians are asking how this even happened.

ArriveCAN was an application that was supposed to cost \$80,000. This is what a group of individuals who spent a weekend replicating the application said it could be done for. Lo and behold, the indicated price of this increased to a couple dozen million and then, more recent, we found out that this app had cost \$54 million; that is \$54 million for an application that individuals said they could have built for \$80,000.

Recently, with the report of the Auditor General, we found out it cost a minimum of \$60 million, and we are not even certain that is the total amount because of the poor documentation done by the government, which speaks to its incompetence.

The main vendor behind this is the infamous GC Strategies, the two-person company working out of its basement, which we originally thought was paid \$11 million. After the Auditor General's report, we found out it was closer to \$19 million. Again, we are not entirely sure because the documentation is not there to even prove that is all it was paid.

It was recently released in the press that this company, this two-person company working out of its basement and not even doing any work, has been given a quarter of a billion dollars in contracts by the NDP-Liberal coalition, by the Liberal government, which is an incredible amount.

Within the arrive scam application and its vendors, we have the possibility of collusion, of price-fixing and certainly inflation of prices, all of these things. One of my colleagues, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, questioned the witnesses. He asked them over and over again what they did and they could not even respond. They were unable to answer the question.

GC Strategies was also determined to have forged résumés in an effort to get these contracts. We all know the penalty for doing this, for example, if one is applying for a private position, or applying to a university or forging a transcript. These things are unheard of, yet it was done by this vendor, which was paid a quarter of a billion dollars by the Liberal government.

We have the destruction of documents by the chief information officer at the time of arrive scam. One cannot even make this stuff up. Again, how did this even happen? Canadians are wondering that.

It gets worse. The head of the CBSA did not even report the RCMP investigation of GC Strategies to the Auditor General, who found out about it in *The Globe and Mail*. The government is so dysfunctional that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. Then we have the integrity director within the CBSA investigating the situation.

• (1340)

We are seeing what happens time and time again. The government is investigating itself. I am not sure where this holds up to be evident. I certainly would love the opportunity, and I think many people would, where we determine ourselves whether we have done wrongdoing or not. Unfortunately, democracy is not supposed to work this way and Canada is not supposed to work this way, but this is the way the arrive scam is. Therefore, again, how did this even happen?

Those who have evaluated what happened here, and we have not even gotten to the RCMP investigation, have not found good things. We had the procurement ombud review of arrive scam and his words were very damning. He found that out of 41 ArriveCAN-related procurements, 23 contracts were issued using a competitive process, but 31.7% of all contracts were non-competitive, sole-source contracts, which is one-third. It is terrible. We also found that 43.5% of contracts were from disincentive bidders using lower rates and encouraging bidders to pick a less risky hire rate. Members may have also heard that GC Strategies, this firm that we have talked so much about in the House of Commons, even won a bid because it wrote the terms to win the bid. It was making up the rules so it could win the bid. It goes on and on.

I will point out everything we see with the arrive scam. We see the incompetence of the government. We see the government not accepting responsibility. We see the complete lack of respect for the taxpayer and no value for money here, and I will talk about that a bit more in a minute. As a microcosm of the government and how it has spent the last close to nine years now, the arrive scam is, sadly, a microcosm event.

It gets worse after the review of the procurement ombud who gave the arrive scam a failing grade. Two weeks ago, and the Liberal government did not want this to happen, we had the release, finally, of the Auditor General's reports. Whatever excuse the Liberals tried to use for the arrive scam, such as the crisis situation, she said that it was not an excuse to not get value for money for the Canadian taxpayer. We found that 18% of invoices submitted by contractors did not have supporting documentation. We know now that task authorities were issued and paid for while not even having

Business of Supply

tasks assigned to them. Essentially, people could have been paid for work that they did not even complete. It is absolutely unbelievable.

In addition, in the Auditor General's report, \$12.2 million could not even be associated to ArriveCAN, or the arrive scam. This amount is unbelievable. We also found in her report that per diem rates were \$1,090 per day compared to the \$675 comparable IT positions in other departments. It is just astounding that these things could happen with the arrive scam, that there could be such blatant disregard for the taxpayer.

However, this is happening by the Liberal government in this day and age. It is a government that just had a \$23.6 billion deficit between April and December of last year, a government that is sending over a million Canadians to food banks and a government that is allowing one in five Canadians to skip meals. The arrive scam is a complete microcosm of the government and this failure.

The good news, as we found out today, is that the RCMP investigation has now been extended to include the arrive scam, which is a big victory for us on this side of the House, our tenacity in our quest for the truth, our not wanting to give up on finding the truth for Canadians and on getting value for them.

However, the final question that remains, which I started my speech with, is how did this even happen?

• (1345)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really curious how this could happen. The Conservatives awarded millions of dollars of contracts to the very same company that the member just called “infamous GC Strategies”, and said that it “does not even do any work”. Would their opposition day motion be more complete and get to the bottom of this issue if it included the millions of dollars that the Conservative Party awarded to this very company, which apparently did not do any IT work? By the way, they were sole-sourced contracts for IT, and the Leader of the Opposition was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport when a majority of these contracts were issued to Transport Canada. How did this happen?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, this would be impossible. What year was GC Strategies incorporated? It was incorporated in 2015.

Canadians need only to look at the \$23.6-billion deficit. Contracting is up 60% with this government in the last eight or nine years.

I refuse to accept the Liberals' attempt to, once again, cover up their use of such a company. Again, the facts speak for themselves. This company was not even incorporated until 2015, when—

Business of Supply

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I ask for unanimous consent to table the Conservative contracts as well as—

Some hon. members: No.

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that if they are seeking unanimous consent, it is always good practice to consult with the other parties before trying to seek that unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, this is the extent to which the Liberal government will go to complete its cover-up. It will do anything to maintain power. It will do anything to hide the truth from Canadians, but Canadians are catching on to this. They may have fallen for the sunny ways in the beginning, but the clouds are out now and people can hear the thunderstorm.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to raise it again. The ArriveCAN scandal fiasco is just the tip of the iceberg. We have watched companies like Deloitte go from \$11 million to \$275 million a year. These are highly paid consulting firms, and the NDP put forward a motion to expand the investigation to look at all outsourcing, including these big corporations.

I have asked Conservatives all day long why they will not talk about expanding it and actually moving forward with an investigation. Is it because one of the former Conservative cabinet ministers is a senior managing director at Deloitte?

Will they comment on why the corporate-controlled parties are working together so that we do not have a full investigation into the outsourcing spending by both of these parties, which is out of control?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it has been pointed out that the NDP voted with its Liberal coalition partners a minimum of eight times to secure the funding for arrive scam.

I will also point out that this member in particular is guilty of this, because he entirely conspired with the Liberal government to obstruct documentation in our McKinsey study last year. He can say what he wants, but he has been completely complicit with this Liberal partner.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, do you know the one thing Canadians actually want? They want their \$60 million back. I have not heard a single Liberal member, including the member for Winnipeg North, say that they are going to do everything they can to get this money back.

I would like my colleague to give me her opinion as to why she thinks the Liberals are not even interested in getting this money back for Canadians.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it is because, frankly, the Liberal government does not care. It is completely tone-deaf to the desperation of the average Canadian. There is one solution for Canada, and that is a Conservative government led by the member for Carleton.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

As members of the House, we share a profound duty to ensure that public funds are used effectively and for the public good. This principle is paramount, especially in times of crisis, when swift action is necessary and resources are stretched thin. The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges requiring urgent and innovative responses. Among them was the development of the ArriveCAN app, a tool swiftly implemented to manage the risks associated with international travel during the pandemic.

It is crucial to recognize the context in which ArriveCAN was developed. It was a period marked by uncertainty and the urgent need to protect public health. ArriveCAN was instrumental in mitigating the spread of the virus by international travel. By simplifying the submission of travel and health information for individuals entering Canada, it made a substantial contribution to our efforts to manage the pandemic effectively.

Drawing from my background in IT consultancy and project management, I aim to provide a nuanced perspective on ArriveCAN, which may not have been shared in the House as of yet. I will focus on three aspects: the development process, cost avoidance and its true valuation.

I will start with the development process. In addressing the development cycle of ArriveCAN, it is important to highlight the extraordinary circumstances under which the application was developed. Traditionally, a development life cycle spans several sequential phases over approximately nine months to a year. These sequential phases are complete business requirements, looking at scope finalization, solution design and solution development, doing testing and piloting, and rolling out and supporting. The total requirements were 177 different functionalities that the app had to do.

However, given the urgent demand created by the pandemic, we shifted to a rapid, agile methodology, progressing on a requirement-by-requirement basis. As the requirements kept evolving and the number of stakeholders, such as the provinces, PHAC, the World Health Organization, security and data protection put extra requirements on how this application was evolving, this approach allowed us to dynamically integrate new requirements as they emerged, ensuring the app was continually updated and adapted to respond to the evolving pandemic situation. This agile development strategy not only expedited the app's rollout but also ensured its flexibility and responsiveness to public needs. This type of development, by virtue of the fact that requirements come at different stages rather than all being identified up front, leads to an increased cost of development.

I do not want to justify the \$60 million, because I think there is a lot of room for improvement on that. Nevertheless, through our discussions and the examination by the Auditor General and the procurement ombudsman, it has become evident that there are concerns regarding the financial management and procurement processes of the ArriveCAN app. While these concerns are valid and demand our attention, it is essential to contextualize the financial aspects of the app within the broader scope of pandemic management and the digital transformation.

It is also crucial to discuss the cost savings or cost avoidance facilitated by ArriveCAN. Replacing the traditional paper-based system, the app presented a significant advantage in terms of cost-efficiency. The estimated cost of processing each paper transaction was \$3 per transaction. Taking into account that this app was used over 60 million times, this would total anywhere from \$120 million to about \$180 million in potential cost savings.

• (1355)

If we look at even the lower end, the \$120 million, that is twice the amount that was spent on ArriveCAN. This figure underscores the financial prudence of the ArriveCAN project, highlighting how technical innovation can lead to substantial savings in public expenditures, especially in a time of crisis.

Lastly, on the topic of valuation, it is essential to differentiate between the cost of developing an app and its market value. If we consider an e-commerce application with 18 million users and 60 million transactions, facilitating billions of dollars in monetary transactions, I would ask any member of this House what its valuation would be.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

SIR JAMES DOUGLAS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, while it is still February, let me rise and wish everyone a happy Black History Month. This is the 62nd Black heritage moment from British Columbia, where I want to celebrate an extraordinary Canadian, a Black Canadian of mixed heritage. His mother was Black and his father was Scottish. Sir James Douglas is generally called “the father of British Columbia”, and he was the first governor.

He stood down thousands of armed miners coming up from the United States who wanted to kill indigenous people and grab their land. This is known as the Fraser Canyon War, and it happened in 1858. He was without an army, but he made it clear to those armed thugs, who had already killed indigenous people and raped their women, that they were no longer in the wild west; they were in a new place where there was rule of law. They would have to have licences to look for gold and they would have to put down their guns.

Thanks to Sir James Douglas, who fought for British Columbia and fought for justice.

Statements by Members

The Speaker: Happy Black History Month.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to urgently bring to members' attention a significant safety issue in civil aviation across the Taiwan Strait. This issue has arisen due to China's unilateral actions in changing the M503 southbound flight route on January 30, 2024. China has changed flight routes and revoked the 2015 cross-strait agreement without any consultation with Taiwan. Its actions seriously jeopardize safety, peace and stability in the region and undermine the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. The strait is vital to global trade, and any disruption would have a significant impact on the entire world.

China's Civil Aviation Administration has been in clear breach of International Civil Aviation Organization regulations. It is crucial to ensure aviation safety standards and protect passenger safety. Now more than ever, it is important that we support global cohesion, the rule of law, and compliance with bilateral treaties.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Canadians who have helped take in Ukrainian families fleeing the illegal invasion of their homeland. This support comes from so many individuals, families, churches, community groups and local businesses that have put aside their own challenges in order to help out. The generosity we have seen has been amazing, with donations, housing and offers of work. People have given not only material support but also the priceless gift of friendship.

Many Ukrainians in Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola appreciate all assistance they have received. However, the ongoing devastation of their homeland raises concerns about their future and whether or not they may continue to stay and work in Canada until the war ends. It is my hope that the government will address these concerns, providing these families with as much certainty as possible.

We must continue supporting the Ukrainians who are worried about their family and friends back home. We must continue to support the Ukrainian people as they bravely fight for their national sovereignty against Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion. We stand with them now; we will stand with them until they are victorious and free.

* * *

YOUTH IN COQUITLAM—PORT COQUITLAM

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I recognize a few remarkable young constituents from Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. Through the GLOCAL organization, these constituents won micro grants by creating educational and engaging projects to empower civic awareness and democratic literacy.

Statements by Members

Richard Mou, Olivia Liu and Larisa Jia won the biggest prize, for creating an IOS game called “Beaver Quiz-A-Mole”, which teaches players about the responsibilities of the Canadian government. Kevin Chuang won for his project called “After the Breach”, which takes a critical analysis of cyber threats to Canadian institutions. Last, Bana Anabtawi and her team won for their formation of a non-profit organization that focuses on community outreach and addresses the gaps within youth leadership.

I congratulate these phenomenal contestants. Their leadership and hard work are an inspiration to us all.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

UKRAINE

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, Putin's Russia once again invaded Ukraine, which has resisted with an admirable show of courage. As yet, the conflict remains confined within its borders, although a front line has undeniably opened up between democracies and dictatorships. Ukraine wants to remain free and democratic. Putin's Russia is jeopardizing not only Ukraine's sovereignty, but also the Ukrainian people's ability to live in their language and culture.

As Quebeckers, we cannot help but feel a special affinity with a nation that lives beside a giant and still holds out against the invaders. Amid their devastated cities, the Ukrainian people are giving the whole world a demonstration of the resolve it takes to defend democracy against totalitarianism. Although other conflicts have tragically captured the world's attention, let us not forget the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Now more than ever, let us reiterate our full support for the Ukrainian nation, because by defending its territory and freedom, it is also defending ours. Everything remains possible.

Slava Ukraini.

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FAIR TRADE LEADER

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, enjoying a nice cup of coffee in the morning is part of everyday life for a lot of people. Knowing that it was made from eco-friendly, fair trade beans makes it taste even better. Sherbrooke-based Café William's mission is to produce the most fairly traded coffee in the world.

Café William has tripled production thanks to its new 100,000-square-foot facility, a \$40-million investment funded in part by Canada Economic Development.

Driven by a desire to grow the business without increasing its carbon footprint, the owners acquired the world's first electric coffee roaster, which will enable them to reduce their operation's greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. They have also decided to use clean transportation: They are importing some of their raw material by sailboat. They are also exploring electric overland transportation.

I would like to congratulate Café William, a Sherbrooke company that is successfully fusing economic development and sustainable development.

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[English]

RURAL CANADIANS

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the Liberal government, Canadians from coast to coast have had enough, especially those in rural Canada, like those from back home in New Brunswick. The urban-rural divide in Canada has only deepened under the current government. When the Minister of Environment states that it will not be investing in any new roads, rural Canadians feel unheard, overlooked and, once again, left behind.

Rural Canadians do not have the luxury of a metro or subway, so when the government quadruples the carbon tax, rural Canadians are disproportionately affected. When the Liberal government insists on some of the most anti-agricultural and anti-natural-resource policies in the world, rural Canadians see their economic potential shut down and their dreams trampled. It should remember that it is rural Canada that keeps us all fed, keeps our lights on, keeps our land and keeps our country moving.

We need every part of the country, both urban and rural, at its best for Canada to reach its full potential. A Conservative government will do just that by axing the tax, balancing the budget, building the homes and stopping the crime. Let the builders build; let the farmers farm. Let the truckers truck, and let Canadians live again.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the achievements of Black Canadians throughout Black History Month, it is imperative we acknowledge the resilience and innovation demonstrated by Black entrepreneurs.

This past week, I had the honour of visiting Whitby's geekspeak Commerce, a hub in our downtown, where it has just wrapped up filming the Black business catalyst program. I was thrilled to pop in and chat with entrepreneurs including Isaac Wanzama, Richard Piccart, Lisa Keizer, Kenesha Lewis, Michael Mosuwaifu and Zachary Thomas.

Feeling the buzz of Black entrepreneurship in action in my local community reminds me of the meaningful work the government has done to improve access to capital and opportunity for Black innovators and entrepreneurs. Whether its through the Black-led philanthropic endowment fund, the Black entrepreneurship program, the social finance fund, or the Black business procurement pilot, Canadians can be sure that the government will continue to recognize and elevate Black entrepreneurs.

I wish members a happy Black History Month.

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150TH ANNIVERSARY OF WESTMOUNT

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to mark the 150th anniversary of the city of Westmount. Since 1874, Westmount's beautiful parks, bustling schools, CEGEPs, synagogues, churches, community centres and outdoor rinks, as well as our 125-year-old library, the first publicly funded library in Quebec, have all helped to foster a deep sense of community and identity. Westmount is like a small town in a big city.

• (1410)

[Translation]

I would like to thank the many volunteers and municipal staff members, as well as the mayor, Christina Smith, and the city council for their leadership and dedication to Westmount's past, present and future.

Congratulations and happy 150th anniversary to Westmount.

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[English]

DARYL KRAMP

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my dad loved this place. He loved the role. He loved the rush, the responsibility and the privilege to represent. He loved the history, the relationships, the potential and the people. I miss my dad. I am heartbroken and so sad that he is no longer here, but also grateful for the beautiful impact he had on me and countless others.

With an infectious optimism and innate ability to lift others up, Daryl Kramp raised the bar for everyone around him. He was an extraordinary man, a respected member of Parliament for 11 years, MPP, business owner, police officer, fastball pitcher, husband, papa and dad. He was an avid reader, writer, leader and patriot. He was an empathetic, generous man who valued character over pedigree. His unwavering drive for success was matched only by his kindness and humility. He was a true mentor.

My dad died February 8, leaving behind a legacy of love and strength. My amazing mom, my sisters and I were all blessed to be by his side. The bond that my dad and I shared is unbreakable, and although he has taken a step back, I know he remains an integral part of my journey, smiling and cheering me on every step of the way.

God bless.

The Speaker: I had the privilege of meeting the hon. member's father, and he will be missed.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Black History Month honours and celebrates the extraordinary contributions of Black Canadians, and in Milton, it is always a privilege to

Statements by Members

witness the profound impact of Black excellence through the remarkable advocacy of numerous organizations.

The African Caribbean Council of Halton, the Centre canadien pour l'unité de la famille, the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton, the Akwaba Cultural Exchange, Council of Nigerian Professionals Inc. and the Association of Nigerians in Milton have tirelessly championed cultural preservation and community empowerment, enriching the lives of many.

Halton Black Voices, the Nigerian Community Halton and Youth in Diaspora have amplified voices and inspired change, paving the way for a more inclusive society. The Halton Black History Awareness Society, ANE Global and the Black Youth Alliance at Boyne Public School have ensured that the legacy of Black heritage is honoured and remembered, educating future generations.

The contributions of the Canadian Black Nurses Alliance, the Foundation for Black Communities and Canadian Association of Black Insurance Professionals are advancing in health care, education and economic empowerment.

In recognizing and uplifting these organizations, we reaffirm our commitment to justice, equality, inclusion and the elimination of systemic racism. Together we will continue to build a country, an economy and a society that work for every single Canadian.

What a profound privilege it is to make this speech today with Canada's first-ever Black Speaker in the chair.

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[Translation]

ARRIVECAN APP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, this Prime Minister, backed by the Bloc Québécois, is not worth the cost.

Speaking of crime, today we learned that the RCMP is going to conduct a full investigation into the ArriveCAN scandal. Even so, we also need the House to support our motion, as the Auditor General of Canada has determined that the app has cost taxpayers at least \$60 million. The procurement ombud also found that 76% of ArriveCAN's contractors performed no work. GC Strategies was paid nearly \$20 million in connection with this app.

Unfortunately, Quebeckers cannot trust the Bloc Québécois to scrutinize government spending. Its own leader has admitted as much. What is more, the Bloc voted in favour of this exorbitant spending eight times.

Statements by Members

Now all parties have a chance to band together to recover the millions lost to the ArriveCAN app by supporting our motion.

There are two things we want today: for the Prime Minister to co-operate with the RCMP investigation and vote for our Conservative motion.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. After eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, corruption, cover-ups or crime.

Only the Prime Minister can turn an \$80,000 app budget into a \$60-million boondoggle. When tasked with holding the government to account, the NDP voted not once, not twice and not three times to keep funding arrive scam; it was eight times that the NDP voted to give tens of millions of tax dollars to two guys in a basement for money-for-nothing contracts.

Common-sense Conservatives voted no. Had the NDP and Bloc done the same, arrive scam funding would never have happened. Conservatives know how hard Canadians work for their money, and we will not award contracts to Liberal insiders so they can hold whisky tastings and private dinners with government officials.

After eight years, it is time to fix what the Liberal-NDP coalition has broken. It is time for a common-sense Conservative government.

* * *

● (1415)

INDUSTRIES IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while lobster is Canada's most valuable seafood export, the industry is more than just numbers. It is about people: hard-working men and women who brave the seas to provide for their families and support their communities.

Atlantic Canadians understand the importance of supporting the sector and promoting it on the world stage. That is why initiatives like the Minister of Agriculture's recent trade mission are so crucial. They not only showcase our world-class products but also open up new opportunities for growth and prosperity in the Atlantic region.

It is truly unfortunate that some Conservative members of Parliament do not think Atlantic Canadian products are good enough to promote abroad. They are truly out of touch with Atlantic Canadians. It is wrong and it is cynical.

Our government remains focused on promoting our products from Atlantic Canada and across the country, increasing demand and driving economic growth for our agriculture and fisheries sectors.

MEN'S SHEDS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Men's Sheds are groups of mostly retired men who come together regularly in the spirit of mutual support.

There are now almost 100 Men's Sheds across Canada, and just last month the Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health confirmed that Men's Sheds provide clear and significant mental health benefits by generating opportunities for camaraderie, a sense of purpose and a sense of inclusion.

In northwest B.C., the Fraser Lake Men's Shed has been up and running since 2018. Its members run a small second-hand store, and they do odd jobs around the community for folks who could not otherwise afford a professional.

I want to give special recognition to Jan Fennema and John Stafford from the Fraser Lake Men's Shed, who recently travelled to the neighbouring community of Houston to share with residents there their Men's Shed experience.

At a time when mental health and social connection are more critical than ever, the Men's Shed movement is a grassroots response that is making a difference, and it is good to see.

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[Translation]

NORTH SHORE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I am very pleased to welcome a delegation from my riding on the north shore.

I would like to acknowledge the following local ambassadors: Denis Miousse, the mayor of Sept-Îles; Paul Lavoie, Chantal Pitt and Pascal Langlois from Développement économique Sept-Îles; and John-James Blanchette, the director of the Sept-Îles Uashat mak Mani-Utenam chamber of commerce.

Today, I will not be alone in singing the praises of the north shore, a vast region with abundant resources and limitless possibilities. Are we not also the proud home of a deep-water port that accounts for nearly 50% of the traffic on the St. Lawrence?

The north shore is a region inhabited by hard-working, welcoming people who are brimming with ambitions and plans for promoting sustainable development to ensure a better future for everyone.

Today, they are adding their voices to mine to remind the House of the key role that Sept-Îles and Uashat mak Mani-Utenam can play in our future. I want to say *tshinashkumitin*, which means thank you, to this passionate delegation.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, crime or corruption. Only common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Canadians deserve answers about how the Liberal government's useless arrive scam app went from costing \$80,000 to at least \$60 million. Just last week, the national president of the CBSA's union said that the \$60 million that was squandered on the arrive scam app could have been used to hire 600 frontline border agents.

This Liberal-NDP coalition is not worth the cost. We now know that this reckless abuse of taxpayer money and blatant corruption is just the tip of the iceberg. Four years of emails have vanished in an apparent attempt to cover up the corruption and destroy records related to this scam app. The NDP voted "yes" at least eight times to give tens of millions of dollars for cost overruns and money-for-nothing contracts to shell companies. Common-sense Conservatives voted "no" every time.

The NDP now has the chance to stand up and vote to release all the missing documents.

* * *

● (1420)

INDIGENOUS TOURISM

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the significant contributions of indigenous tourism in Canada.

Studies show that eight out of 10 Canadians are craving an authentic indigenous experience during their travels. Whether it be visiting a powwow, a local heritage park like Wanuskewin or Membertou, or taking a trip to Eskasoni's Goat Island cultural journeys, indigenous tourism continues to thrive in Canada.

Indigenous tourism is an integral part of our tourism growth strategy, and we are proud to have launched the indigenous tourism fund. This \$20-million investment is not only reviving this sector, but ensuring its sustainable growth.

The world's largest indigenous tourism conference is being held in Ottawa this week to gather community leaders, entrepreneurs and partners dedicated to promoting and celebrating the vibrant world of indigenous tourism. Please join me in wishing them a productive conference and continued success in building a better Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption.

Oral Questions

Today, the Conservatives received a letter from the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the RCMP, confirming that there is a now a police investigation into arrive scam. The commissioner confirmed to the committee that the Prime Minister refused to hand over documents in the SNC-Lavalin and Aga Khan island scandals.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to providing all the documents and all the evidence to the RCMP for the investigation into arrive scam?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been saying for several weeks that the RCMP is looking into ArriveCAN. This is largely because senior CBSA officials sent documents to the RCMP and asked the RCMP to look into the matter.

There are several investigations under way. We will continue to be available and to give these authorities all the documents and information they need.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption.

Today, Conservatives got a letter from the commissioner of the RCMP indicating that the national police force is now formally investigating the arrive scam and the Auditor General's report into it.

We know that the government deprived the Auditor General of key documents to calculate the full cost and the breadth of the scandal. We also know that the Prime Minister refused to hand over documents in the SNC-Lavalin and the Aga Khan island scandals.

Will the Prime Minister commit, here and now, to giving the RCMP all the documents and evidence on arrive scam?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition seems to be impressed with some information that has been known in the public space for many weeks.

The RCMP have confirmed, previously, that they are looking into the circumstances around ArriveCAN. We have total confidence in the RCMP to do this important work.

I will remind the Leader of the Opposition that the president of the Canada Border Services Agency referred these questions, proactively, to the RCMP. We will continue to do whatever we need to do to co-operate with the national police force and every other ongoing investigation.

*Oral Questions***CARBON PRICING**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “and every other ongoing investigation”. How many police investigations are the Liberals facing?

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of food. Today we got a terrible report from the charity, Second Harvest, which reports that this year they expect a million additional visits to food banks, and that last year 36% of charities had to turn people away because they were running out of resources.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his inflationary carbon tax on farmers and food?

• (1425)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fighting for Canadians, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives.

Today, I just appeared in front of the agriculture committee. It was shocking to see that one of the members was defending the profit margin of a foreign food processor, at a time when we should all be fighting for Canadians in this House. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to do something for Canadians, he should vote for Bill C-59 to increase competition in this country.

More competition means more choice, better prices for Canadians and more innovation. Canadians understand that. Will he understand?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I understand is that after eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost of food. If he thought that grocery profits were too high after eight years, one would think that he might have done something about it.

Instead, we now have a massive increase. Let us get this straight, Second Harvest predicts there will be a million more visits to food banks this year than in last year's record-breaking year. In fact, many charities can no longer give people food because they have actually run out.

In light of the failure of the carbon tax and the pain it is causing, will the Liberals axe the tax so that Canadians can afford to eat?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing Canadians know is that the Leader of the Opposition's preferred verb is “cut”. We all know he would be cutting.

When we look at the record on both sides, let me tell the House what we have done in the last few months to fight for Canadians. We have launched the largest reform on competition in this nation's history. We have made sure that we have a functioning consumer affairs bureau. We have made sure that we now have in this country more measures to fight for Canadians.

Every member of this House should be fighting for Canadians. The question is, will the Conservatives fight for Canadians with us?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer just proves that, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

It is not just that a million more people will visit food banks this year than in last year's record-smashing year; it is that now there is a large Facebook group of 8,000 people who call themselves the “Dumpster Diving Network”. So desperate are they that, not only can they not afford groceries or find food at food banks, they are literally jumping into garbage cans to find food.

How desperate do Canadians have to get before the government will finally axe its tax on food?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past eight years, I have watched, time and again, the Conservatives stand up to vote against the very measures that are putting money in the pockets of families to help them cover the cost of food.

When it comes to the Canada child benefit, we stopped sending cheques to millionaires, so we could put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 families.

When it comes to taxes, we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% to cut them for the middle class.

When it comes to seniors, we put more money in the pockets of low-income single seniors.

For every one of these measures, Conservatives have opposed them.

We will continue to do what is necessary to allow families to put food on the table, no matter how hard they oppose it.

* * *

[Translation]

PHARMACARE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone should be concerned about the Liberal and NDP love of spending, but Quebecers have yet another reason to be concerned: That spending is not in line with their priorities. The Liberals and the NDP are spending money to give Canadians things Quebecers already have. First came child care. Then came dental coverage managed by the private sector. Quebec has its own publicly run dental plan. Now they want to give Canadians Quebecers' pharmacare plan.

Given that they are just imitating Quebec's pharmacare expertise, will Quebec have the right to opt out with full compensation?

I think that should be obvious.

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a bill coming up in the House of Commons that will give us an opportunity to lower drug prices and improve access to drugs. I hope all members of the House will support this bill.

It is important not to criticize something that does not yet exist. Let us wait until the bill is introduced.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, something even more urgent is the right to opt out of dental care with full compensation and no strings attached. Quebec already has its own system, and a public system at that, unlike the NDP and Liberal system, which invites the private health care sector right on in through the front door. Quebec has clearly stated its desire to improve its own system. If Quebec's health care innovations are good enough for Canada to imitate, Quebec must surely deserve respect for its expertise.

When will Quebec receive its unconditional share of federal dental care funding?

• (1430)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Bloc Québécois is obviously trying to pick fights. It is always picking fights.

Our intention is simply to improve the quality of health care for Canadians across the country. In Quebec, for example, it is absolutely essential that every Quebecker everywhere in the province be able to receive dental care. That is our goal, and we intend to achieve it in a spirit of co-operation, not by squabbling.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent report by the OurCare initiative reveals that 30% of Quebeckers, one in three people, do not have a family doctor. In the last election, the Prime Minister promised to invest and help the provinces hire health care professionals, but people are still waiting for a family doctor. While the Liberals drag their feet on transfers, Quebeckers are paying the price for this government's broken promises.

When will the Liberals finally do their part to ensure that every Quebecker has a family doctor?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is amazing that the Government of Canada is providing an additional \$200 billion over the next 10 years for health care. It takes time to reach a good agreement with each province and territory. It is very clear that by the end of March, there will be an agreement with every province and territory to improve the quality of health care and ensure that our health care system is the best in the world.

That is our goal, and it can only be reached with co-operation.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian should have access to the health care they need when they need it, but a new survey reveals that over six million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor. The Liberals promised to hire 7,500 doctors and nurses in the last election, but they have not delivered. While Liberals delay, Conservatives want to cut the health care people depend on.

When will the Liberals act to ensure that more doctors and nurses are hired so everyone can get high-quality and timely health care?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, coming out of a pandemic, coming out of some of the most difficult times our planet has ever faced in terms of global health, we have stepped forward. I want to thank the member in the NDP for his work and for pointing out that the Conservatives will cut, and cut deeply. When they talk about what their plans are, they fail to mention that, to achieve them, they are going to need to cut billions and billions out of health, with devastating consequences. In contrast, we are investing in every province and every territory of this country to make sure that we have the best health care system. We will be relentless in that focus, and we will not let the Conservatives deter us.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. The NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, and he is going to make everything more expensive on April 1, with another carbon tax hike; the effects on Canadians are devastating.

A new report from GoFundMe says that Canadians started 200,000 online charity drives to help raise money just to cover day-to-day expenses.

Instead of forcing Canadians to ask for help from online crowd-sourcing campaigns, why does the Prime Minister not do the obvious thing, cancel his carbon tax hike and stop making things more expensive?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year was the hottest year on record on the planet, and the Conservative leader and his party continue to deny climate change. Meanwhile, with our carbon rebate, we are putting money back into the pockets of Canadian families. Are they going to vote against \$1,200 for Ontario families, \$1,800 for Alberta families and \$1,200 for Manitoba families? That does not sound like common sense to me.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are going to axe the tax and leave the money in Canadians' pockets in the first place. Canadians are not fooled by this shell game. They know the rebate does not cover all the costs of the carbon tax; manufacturers and producers raise their prices to pay their share of the carbon tax, and all that gets passed on to consumers.

Sites like GoFundMe used to be used to help children who lost their parents tragically; now Canadians are turning to crowdsourcing to help pay their food bills. Officials say that 56,000 campaigns were started just to pay for the cost of food alone.

Why does the Prime Minister not just axe the tax so prices can come down?

• (1435)

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the difference between that side of the House and this side of the House is that we do not deny the existence of climate change; we want to protect it for generations to come.

Are you going to take money away from Canadian families, Mr. Speaker, by voting against \$1,200 for Ontario families, \$1,800 for Alberta families and \$1,200 for Manitoba families? That is taking money away from Canadians by telling them they are not going to have the rebates and voting against them. That is not common sense.

The Speaker: I encourage members on both sides of the House to allow those asking and answering questions to do so uninterrupted. It is hard for the Speaker to understand at times.

Perhaps the President of the Treasury Board was referring to the Speaker, but I will remind members that comments are made through the Speaker.

The hon. member for Thornhill has the floor.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, carbon taxes are driving up the cost of food. People are literally turning to dumpsters because they cannot afford groceries. A report from the Toronto Star says dumpster diving is a new trend. Here is what one will not read in the Star: Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

What does the Toronto Star have to write in order for the radical environment minister to show some compassion and stop the 23% April 1 tax hike for all Canadians?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, on this side of the House, we will continue to fight climate change while putting money back into the pockets of Canadian families. As I mentioned, that means we are going to be providing rebates to Canadians, money back in their pockets, which the Conservatives are going to vote against. I ask the opposition: When are its members going to stop cutting supports to Canadians and pay attention to the most vulnerable in this country?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the radical environment minister will not even get up and answer the question. He could not sell his own carbon tax, which the Prime Minister had to rebrand. How is he going to rebrand dumpster div-

ing? This is a minister who wants to ban cars, ban roads, ban Canadian energy, ban straws and ban stoves and tell Canadians that they have it better.

We all know that, after eight years, this tired government and the environment minister are out of control. Will someone over there stand up for struggling Canadians and let him walk back his carbon tax hike, as he has to do with everything else?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we will be standing up for Canadians. Every single member on this side of the House is wanting to stand up.

While the Conservatives would like to make up a story, they can just look at our record. We have led the industrial revolution in electric cars. We have brought more investment—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There are some members whose voices carry, and they know who they are. I would ask them to please keep their voices down and allow the hon. member to finish his answer.

• (1440)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members of what Canadians know: On this side of the House, we believe we can fight climate change and have a prosperous future for our children. We brought Stellantis into this country. We brought Volkswagen into this country. We brought Northvolt into this country.

We have created jobs for the next generation, fought climate change and ensured that Canada will lead in the 21st century.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

One in five families is living in energy poverty, and we know that rate is even higher in rural areas, such as northern Ontario. While they laugh about it, why does the Prime Minister not finally axe his April carbon tax hike so that Canadians can afford to heat their homes?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that member of Parliament needs to be unplugged from the wall and plugged back in, but here is what I hope will happen when that reboot occurs: I hope he will get up from his place, walk down to the Leader of the Opposition and say “Pass the fall economic statement; help Canadians. Pass child care; help the moms and dads out there who are waiting for those needed supports.” He can tell that to his leader. When will that member, instead of trying to get his leader's lines right, stand up for Canadians and get them the supports that they need?

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter how much they try to distract or deny, their plan is simply not working. The carbon tax is not an environmental plan; emissions are on the rise. More Canadians are paying more in the tax than they are getting back in rebates. One in five families is living in energy poverty, and two million Canadians are going to a food bank every single month.

How much more must Canadians struggle before the Liberals finally listen to our common-sense plan and axe the tax?

The Speaker: I think a lot of Canadians at home noticed how the hon. member for Kenora was able to ask his question relatively free from interruption.

I am going to ask the hon. minister to respond. The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives still debate whether climate change is real, while some of those members say that climate change is actually created by body heat from humans and others say that carbon dioxide is good for the planet, 200,000 farmers in the last decade have said that they have experienced the impacts of climate change, making food costs go up. There is no link between carbon pricing and food prices, but there is a link between climate change impacts and food prices.

What is the Conservative response? It is more climate change.

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, members from all parties—Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Bloc—unanimously voted to do away with two classes of seniors when it comes to receiving old age security.

Members will recall that the government had decided to limit benefit increases to those aged 75 and over only. In committee, MPs from all parties voted to do away with this terrible idea. Now, the government just needs to give royal recommendation so that we can do away with these two classes of seniors.

Will the government give royal recommendation to Bill C-319?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have been there for seniors. Increasing old age security was the right thing to do. They are more

likely to outlive their savings, have disabilities and need health care.

We also increased the guaranteed income supplement, improved the Canada pension plan and introduced a new dental plan.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the asylum seekers file, the Minister of Immigration has some nerve. It has been since 2021 that Quebec has been calling on the federal government to reimburse the costs and ensure that asylum seekers are spread out among the provinces. It has been three years.

Today, the minister has the nerve to say that the Government of Quebec did not seem serious about sitting down to discuss this. He complains that Quebec suddenly threw out some figures at a press conference.

Does he realize that if he had been paying his debt since 2021 and negotiating instead of hiding that there would not be a problem today?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is fair to talk about reality. Imagine if I send someone a bill for \$500, we talk and the next day I hold a press conference to double the bill without justification. That is kind of what we are dealing with here. We are responsible governments.

For my part, I talk to the people in my riding, in downtown Montreal, who are welcoming asylum seekers. They have not received one red cent from the Government of Quebec. These sums need to be justified. We are prepared to work with the Government of Quebec.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill would not be as high if the federal government dealt with asylum claims in a timely fashion. Former Liberal minister David Heurtel reminded us of that in the *Journal de Montr al*. Quebec experienced the same problems in 2018 under Philippe Couillard. Even then, Quebec was already asking the federal government to reduce wait times. Something that is supposed to take a maximum of 60 days should never take a minimum of 60 months. Six years later, nothing has changed. According to the former Liberal minister, the federal government's inaction is criminal.

When will the minister finally address these criminal, inhumane and extremely costly delays?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is partly right. It is true that there has been a historic influx of asylum seekers in Canada and that those numbers have gone up by about 50% to 60%. There is more work to be done, but it does not involve sending money to Quebec because Quebec does not spend that money on asylum seekers.

Oral Questions

I admit that the distribution of asylum seekers must be fair, and we are working on that. For example, a lot of people move to Ontario. We are helping them, but these people have to give their consent. First and foremost, we need to treat people humanely. We are willing to do that, and I am sure that Quebec is too.

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*[English]***ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

Today, the commissioner of the RCMP confirmed that the Liberals' scandal-plagued \$60-million arrive scam app is, in fact, under RCMP investigation. We have seen the Prime Minister use the powers of the executive to try to shield himself from criminal investigations, just as he did with his trip to the Aga Khan's island and the SNC-Lavalin scandal, for both of which he was found guilty of breaking the ethics act.

Will the Prime Minister fully co-operate with the RCMP investigation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only will the government co-operate with the RCMP at every occasion, but it was also the government that referred a number of these cases to the RCMP. My friend has just realized what the RCMP confirmed some weeks ago, which is that it is looking into the issue of ArriveCAN.

Our government thinks it is important that the Auditor General's report be followed carefully, and we think it is important for parliamentary committees and other investigations to determine the facts of the issue before we throw mud around the House of Commons.

• (1450)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister and his colleagues thought that the Auditor General's work was so important, they would not have voted against the audit the Leader of the Opposition and common-sense Conservatives voted for. That was how we found out about this \$60-million scandal, which has landed at the minister's feet. Now we have the RCMP investigating them. Twice before, the Prime Minister used the powers of the executive to shield himself from criminal investigations with the RCMP.

My question this time is simple. Will the Prime Minister interfere in the investigation again or will he allow the RCMP to do its work?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that question.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable work done by the Auditor General. She indicated her support for the RCMP's operations sev-

eral weeks ago. That is not new. She has stated this publicly many times. We could help the member find the places where she did that. She clearly said that she was already in contact with the RCMP to ensure that everyone can do their job.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is breaking news today from the ethics committee. The RCMP have now confirmed that they are investigating the \$60-million ArriveCAN boondoggle. While common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, crime or corruption after eight years.

Will the Prime Minister co-operate with the RCMP and its criminal investigation, or will he yet again try to obstruct?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how good the Conservative Party is in providing slogans and doing all those sorts of things.

However, it is a bit strange to say that this is breaking news because it has been known for many weeks now that the RCMP and the Auditor General have been working really well together, and they will keep working together really well. That is what their jobs are about.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister needs to review the evidence from the ethics committee.

A two-person consultant company working out of their basement doing no IT work received \$20 million tax dollars. Talk about hitting the taxpayer lottery. This sham of a company is already under RCMP investigation. Today, we learned the RCMP is investigating this in all kinds of criminality.

I will ask again: Will the Prime Minister fully co-operate and waive all cabinet confidences, or will he hide again and obstruct?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague learned something today that has been known in the public domain for a number of weeks.

We have said from the beginning that the government's responsibility is to ensure that taxpayers' money is always managed well. In this case, the Auditor General identified a number of opportunities that needed to be investigated and where the government will follow all of the recommendations. If people have done something inappropriate with taxpayers' money, they will be held to account.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, people in the north are paying enormous amounts for food as the CEOs of the grocery chains make millions of dollars. Nunavummiut have said for years that nutrition north is not working, and the government is ignoring them. Nutrition north is keeping many northerners in poverty as the subsidy is going to CEOs' profits, not lowering food prices.

Why is the minister padding the pockets of rich CEOs instead of helping northerners afford their groceries?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that food prices in the north are too high. Affordability is a real issue in the north. Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that 100% of the nutrition north retail subsidy is passed on directly to northerners.

We have worked, and we will continue to work, with territorial governments, indigenous partners and people living in the north and the Arctic to bring down prices. There is a lot of work to do. We are committed to getting it done.

* * *

● (1455)

HEALTH

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, personal support workers are the backbone of our senior care system. They relieve young families worried about how they will take care of both their children and their parents. However, despite everything they do, many of these workers cannot retire with the dignity they deserve. For three years, the Liberal government has promised SEIU and other health care units help with building their retirement savings. It is a \$50-million commitment, yet not a single dollar has flowed to these workers. New Democrats demand better for our care workers.

Will the Liberal government honour its commitment and release the funds these health care workers deserve before the fiscal year ends?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me give my thanks to personal care support workers. During the pandemic, which was a time so difficult for all of us, it was enormously difficult for personal care support workers, who did extraordinary work.

We did make a commitment to support provinces. It is the provinces that have the principal responsibility for this. We expect them to step up in supports for personal care support workers. We have said we are there to help them, but it is their lead, and they need to make sure that these individuals are compensated and acknowledged in the way that they deserve.

Oral Questions

LABOUR

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last November, our government tabled legislation to ban the use of replacement workers in federally regulated industries, a commitment from our 2021 election platform. This is something that the labour movement in Canada has been asking for since before Canada was a country. This will both make the collective bargaining process stronger and make employers and unions focus on the negotiating table, where the best deals are made.

Will the Minister of Labour explain to the House how our bill to ban replacement workers will strengthen the collective bargaining process in this country?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are banning replacement workers. We are banning replacement workers because we believe in collective bargaining. We are banning replacement workers because the best deals are made at the table, bigger paycheques are negotiated at the table, and better labour relations and long-term stability are created at the table. Let us keep that bargaining table free and fair with the full support of every MP in the House.

With unanimous consent, let us vote to move Bill C-58. Let us make some history. Let us ban replacement workers.

* * *

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, that is the Conservative common sense plan.

Common sense is also knowing the extent of the Liberal arrive scam disaster. Even though the Liberals can count on the Bloc Québécois to close their eyes to millions of dollars in spending, the Conservatives want to shed light on the arrive scam scandal.

Will the Prime Minister co-operate with the RCMP in its investigation into arrive scam or will he once again refuse to fully co-operate with the police, as he did in the cases of the Aga Khan's island and SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague, whom I like a lot, on his ability to repeat his leader's slogans.

The Conservatives are working hard on that. What they are less good at is following the news. For weeks now the Auditor General has been working with many other organizations, including the RCMP, to shed light on the disturbing observations she raised in her report just a few weeks ago.

Oral Questions

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague were more aware of what is happening in Canada, he would know that after eight years under this Liberal Prime Minister, two million people are going to food banks every month. Food banks are now lining up to get the food they need to feed the lines of hungry people. That is what Canada looks like under this Prime Minister.

The Liberal government, with Bloc support, managed to find a way to spend at least \$60 million on an app that was supposed to cost \$80,000.

I will repeat my question. Is the Prime Minister going to voluntarily co-operate with the RCMP, or is he going to cover up the arrive scam yet again?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians are seeing on television is a Conservative Party that opposes all of the measures. They have consistently voted against every measure we have introduced to help Canadians. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against competition reform, one of the most important reforms in the country.

I want to ask them a question. People are watching them at home. Will they vote for our bill to allow more competition reforms in the country, more choice for consumers and better prices?

It is time they did something for Canadians.

• (1500)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner was clear this morning. He wrote to the Leader of the Opposition to confirm that a full investigation will be conducted into the ArriveCAN affair.

What is more, we learned from the RCMP commissioner in committee that the Prime Minister obstructed the investigation into both the SNC-Lavalin affair and the Aga Khan affair.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that he will fully and completely co-operate with this RCMP investigation and that he will not interfere with it?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am glad that my colleague has noticed something that has been common knowledge for some weeks now.

My colleague, the Minister of Procurement, clearly indicated that the Auditor General had investigated some troubling circumstances surrounding contracts awarded by the Canada Border Services Agency.

Obviously, the government's responsibility is to ensure that measures are in place to prevent this from happening again and to co-operate with the law enforcement officials who will be investigating the matter.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is clear to us is that, in November 2022, the government voted against the proposal to ask the Auditor General to conduct an investigation. The Liberals were not the ones who helped discover what had happened with ArriveCAN. At the

time, some 10,000 people were forced to quarantine because of a tool that did not work.

Can the Prime Minister confirm this time that he will not obstruct the RCMP investigation and that he will ask his government to hand over all the documents and ensure that we get to the bottom of the ArriveCAN scandal?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already answered this question multiple times.

However, there is one question which has still not been answered.

Given the Leader of the Opposition's policy of intimidation, insults and name-calling, will my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles agree to join my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for a meeting next week with the Quebec City municipal council to tell all elected officials and the people of Quebec City why his leader insulted them and called them incompetent?

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ArriveCAN is the result of the federal government's dependence on dubious consultants.

GC Strategies, a two-man company offering no real services, pocketed \$20 million, but it was not the only one. Dalian, another two-person company offering no real services, got \$8 million. Ninety-nine per cent of Dalian's contracts are with the federal government. It is hard to know what that company is doing with all that money because La Presse has revealed that it does business in two tax havens.

How many other companies like these is the federal government giving our money to, and what is it doing to make sure our share comes back to us?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the whole ArriveCAN affair is completely unacceptable, and that is why the work and the investigations continue.

As for tax havens, of course, they are equally unacceptable. I can assure the House that we have a competent team that is well equipped to carry out the necessary investigations on any file whenever there is any doubt.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the reliance on dubious consultants is not limited to ArriveCAN or to the Liberals. Under Stephen Harper, the Conservatives themselves gave millions of dollars to Coredal Systems Consulting, a company that does not provide any services and that was founded by the same two people who founded GC Strategies and who pocketed \$20 million for ArriveCAN. Fortunately, the committee will investigate all of the contracts awarded to these two individuals, but we need to go even further.

Will the government commit to disclosing all of the contracts since 2004 that connect the Conservatives and the Liberals to any company that does not provide any service other than finding subcontractors?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a little less than four years ago, Canada was going into the worst health crisis since 1919 and the worst economic crisis since 1929-30. We had to close the border at the request of then President Trump. We had to deal with \$1 billion a day in economic costs and with the hundreds of people who were dying every week in long-term care facilities in Quebec and across the country.

We had to act quickly and effectively. That is what we asked the public service to do. However, public servants were supposed to follow the rules. Unfortunately, some of those rules were not followed. That is what the Auditor General found.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. The government spent a minimum of \$60 million on arrive scam. It could even be more. We do not know because there is missing documentation. IT middlemen at GC Strategies got \$20 million for doing no actual work. The top cop in the RCMP announced today a full investigation into arrive scam.

Today, the Prime Minister has a decision to make: Will he co-operate with the RCMP, or will he obstruct justice, as he usually does?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this question has received multiple answers, including from our colleague, the Minister of Public Safety. If the Conservatives are trying to find new questions to ask, I suggest asking these. Why, for instance, during the eight years of our government, have we built 10 times more homes than during the 10 years of the Conservative government? Why has poverty fallen by half in Canada? Why is the Canada child benefit taking 400,000 children and their parents out of poverty every single month? There are a couple of other questions on which we would be interested to hear from Conservative members.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the Auditor General said that a crisis situation is no excuse for this lack of value for money for Canadians. Conservatives have today put forward a motion, related to arrive scam, to get money back from the contractors who did no actual work. There is one person in this chamber who can make that decision: the Prime Minister. He has the power to make the decision to get the money back for hard-working Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to getting the money back for Canadians, or will he shirk his responsibility, as he usually does?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government has said from the beginning that

those who misused taxpayers' money will be held to account. Once the investigations that the CBSA, for example, ordered internally and the RCMP report is completed, if money was misappropriated, of course the government will take all the steps to recoup that money.

We have said from the beginning that anybody who mishandles taxpayers' money will face the consequences, and that is exactly what this government is doing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those who misuse taxpayers' money will face the consequences in the next election. While common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption after eight years. We heard ministers telling us today that RCMP criminal investigation into corruption in their government has become so commonplace, after eight years, it is not really news anymore. I am old enough to remember a time when it was a big deal that the RCMP investigated the government. It has been too many times, and it is time the government be held to account.

Finally, will the minister tell us whether the government will co-operate with the RCMP investigation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because my hon. friend asserts something with manufactured indignation does not make it true. What we have said from the beginning is that we take the responsibility to manage taxpayers' money very seriously. That is why, when the border services agency identified irregularities, it began an internal investigation and referred the matter, as is appropriate, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Our government will always do what is necessary to hold everyone who may have misused taxpayers' money to account.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indigenous tourism has the power to create jobs, transform the tourism industry and advance reconciliation. It is worth over \$1.2 billion and supports more than 30,000 jobs across the country. Last November, the Minister of Tourism announced the creation of the micro and small business stream of the indigenous tourism fund.

Can the minister tell us how our government is supporting the indigenous tourism industry to ensure its sustainable growth?

Oral Questions

• (1510)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The tourism fund is about empowering indigenous peoples to advance economic reconciliation. At the international indigenous tourism conference today, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and our government announced more than 79 projects.

Unlike the Conservatives, who want to cut the indigenous tourism fund, we on this side of the House believe in its future.

[English]

As a government, we will always support indigenous tourism. We will always support indigenous communities in making their own decisions, choosing their own paths and growing their tourism sector at their own pace.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us make a contrast. While common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, the Prime Minister is tripping over his feet trying to save his reputation by covering up yet another scandal. He is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

Will the Prime Minister release all the Winnipeg lab documents today, or will the shame and embarrassment be too much to endure?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to redactions, it was the Public Health Agency of Canada that conducted them. I would ask the opposition members this: Is it their position that a government should be involved in redacting documents? That is a deeply disturbing thing for them to hold as a proposition.

Instead, what happened was that we asked Parliament, we suggested and Conservatives refused to look at the documents or to participate but eventually did, to ensure that parliamentarians could look at what information was there and could make the decision that the redactions done by the Public Health Agency were or were not appropriate. The process worked. It was a process we introduced and one they supported eventually—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us make a contrast again. Two scientists at our only high-security lab collaborated with the Beijing government. At least one Beijing military scientist was allowed in the lab. Members of Parliament, including Liberals, have said that it is essential for the government to release the documents.

Why are the Liberals still covering up the scandal? Are they afraid of the embarrassment? The Liberal government needs to release those lab documents today for all Canadians to see.

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am in the awkward position of agreeing. We were actually the ones who said the documents needed to be looked at by parliamentari-

ans. We were the ones who introduced the process that asked parliamentarians to get together. Unfortunately, the Conservatives said no. Eventually, they did participate, and then parliamentarians had an opportunity to take a look at the redactions done by the Public Health Agency. Now, those documents, after the work of parliamentarians has been done, will be shared. That is exactly what we wanted to happen to make sure there is maximum public exposure, while at the same time respecting our national security laws.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. I do not know how he can look himself in the mirror at the end of the day.

I would like to remind the House that we, the common-sense Conservatives, will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

This Liberal government allows violent criminals to serve their sentences in the comfort of their living rooms with the complicity of the Bloc Québécois. A teenage girl was lured by a former police officer now serving his sentence at home. A woman was attacked with a knife by her ex-spouse, who was previously arrested twice for domestic violence.

When will the Liberals stop their soft-on-crime policies? When will they protect victims?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

Domestic violence and intimate partner violence is a top priority on this side of the House. We addressed this issue twice, in Bill C-75 and in Bill C-48 with respect to bail conditions for persons charged with or involved in this type of crime.

We will always fight domestic violence and protect women and men across Canada.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Agriculture was in Malaysia and the Philippines on a trade mission to promote and secure new markets for our agri-food products.

Instead of taking a team Canada approach to promoting trade, and I will say they have been a bit iffy on trade, just ask Ukraine, the Conservatives decided to gaslight and to critique the minister for simply highlighting the important—

Government Orders

LABOUR

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1515)

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am having difficulty hearing the latter part of the question. I would ask all members, on all sides, to please carry on your conversations more quietly so that we can hear the member, who is far away from the Chair.

I am going to add 20 seconds to the hon. member's question.

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the Conservatives are not very happy about trade right now, but the minister was in the Philippines and Malaysia promoting trade and the importance of the seafood industry to Atlantic Canada.

Can the minister update the House on his trade mission and educate the member for Thornhill on the importance of lobster to Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for giving me another opportunity to promote world-class Canadian products, including lobster.

Farmers and fishers expect their government to open new markets, and in fact, that is just what we did. I officially opened a new Indo-Pacific trade office that will help promote Canadian agriculture and seafood products. I always promote Canadian products when I am overseas, no matter whether I am in the government or in the opposition. It is vitally important that we promote the fishers and farmers who work so hard for their dollar.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than eight million people in Sudan have been displaced through 10 months of war. This has been devastating for people in Sudan and for their family members in Canada.

The special immigration measure for Ukrainians set important standards, and it should apply everywhere else. Canada showed that we can help those facing war and persecution when 220,000 Ukrainians got to safety. However, the Liberals put an arbitrary 1,000-person limit for people in Gaza and 3,250 for Sudan.

Will the minister lift these caps so that no Canadians with families in war zones are discriminated against?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the pathway for people fleeing war in Sudan opens today.

We worked with a number of Sudanese umbrella organizations on this important measure so that Canadians are really showing that they are opening their doors to people fleeing war. I am always ready to be more flexible as we see the situation evolve. It is clear that we, as Canadians, need to do more when it comes to, in particular, this forgotten war that is obviously getting less media attention than all the other devastating wars around the world. We are prepared to do more. We will continue to work with the umbrella organizations to make sure that they can welcome Sudanese people fleeing war.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 30% of the screening officers at Victoria's airport have lost their jobs without due process and with no access to an appeal.

Their employer wanted to keep them on, but the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority interfered, undermining labour relations and costing people their jobs. To make matters worse, the Minister of Transport refuses to meet with them. Again, the Liberals are dropping the ball when it comes to protecting workers.

Why is the minister refusing to meet with these workers and their union?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say, certainly today of all days, we stand with workers, and we stand for a stable and fair working environment. I will immediately look into the situation that the member described.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-58, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Industrial Relations Board Regulations, 2012, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-58.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 647)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bergeron

Government Orders

Berthold	Bérubé	Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Bezan	Bibeau	Lemire	Leslie
Bittle	Blaikie	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Blair	Blanchet	Liepert	Lightbound
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Lloyd	Lobb
Block	Blois	Long	Longfield
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Bradford	Bragdon	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Brassard	Brière	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Majumdar	Maloney
Calkins	Cannings	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Caputo	Carr	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Carrie	Casey	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Chabot	Chagger	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Chahal	Chambers	McGuinty	McKay
Champagne	Champoux	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Chatel	Chen	McPherson	Melillo
Chiang	Chong	Mendès	Medicino
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Miao	Michaud
Cooper	Cormier	Miller	Moore
Coteau	Dabrusin	Morantz	Morrice
Dalton	Dancho	Morrison	Morrissey
Davidson	Davies	Motz	Murray
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Muys	Naqvi
Desbiens	Desilets	Nater	Noormohamed
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Normandin	O'Connell
Diab	Doherty	Oliphant	O'Regan
Dong	Dowdall	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Drouin	Dubourg	Perkins	Perron
Duclos	Duguid	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Rayes	Redekopp
Ellis	Epp	Reid	Rempel Garner
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Richards	Roberts
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Robillard	Rogers
Ferri	Fillmore	Romanado	Rood
Findlay	Fisher	Rota	Ruff
Fonseca	Fortier	Sahota	Sajjan
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Saks	Samson
Fraser	Fry	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Gaheer	Gainey	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Gallant	Garon	Schiefke	Schmale
Garrison	Gaudreau	Seeback	Serré
Gazan	Généreux	Sgro	Shanahan
Genuis	Gerretsen	Sheehan	Shields
Gill	Gladu	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Godin	Goodridge	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gould	Gourde	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Gray	Green	Small	Sorbara
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Soroka	Sousa
Hallan	Hanley	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hardie	Hepfner	Stewart	St-Onge
Hoback	Holland	Strahl	Stubbs
Housefather	Hughes	Sudds	Tassi
Hussen	Hutchings	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Iacono	Idlout	Therrien	Thomas
Ien	Jaczek	Thompson	Tochor
Jeneroux	Johns	Tolmie	Trudel
Joly	Jones	Turnbull	Uppal
Jowhari	Julian	Valdez	Van Bynen
Kayabaga	Kelloway	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Kelly	Khalid	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Khanna	Khera	Vecchio	Vidal
Kitchen	Kmiec	Vien	Viersen
Koutrakis	Kram	Vignola	Villemure
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Virani	Vis
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Wagantall	Warkentin
Kwan	Lake	Waugh	Webber
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Williams	Williamson
Lapointe	Larouche	Yip	Zahid
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Zarrillo	Zuberi— 318
Lawrence	LeBlanc		

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Dreeshen
Plamondon

Ng
Rodriguez— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APP

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me summarize what I talked about during the first minutes of my speech.

I talked about the fact that the ArriveCAN application could not have been developed for \$80,000, but it should not have cost \$60 million either. We talked about the paper cost of this application. Had we processed 60 million transactions, it would have cost \$180 million. We talked about the valuation of an application as such. If it were an e-commerce application, transactions at the transactional level, it would have been hundreds of millions of dollars.

This perspective is vital in understanding the true value of ArriveCAN. The app's development cost, while substantial, represented just one aspect of its overall contributions. The efficiency, safety and economic benefits it delivered during a critical time offers a more comprehensive picture of its value to Canada and its citizens.

Our commitment to rectifying the identified shortcomings in the ArriveCAN project extend beyond mere acknowledgement. The departments are actively implementing measures to enhance the procurement and project management practices to prevent such discrepancies in the future. These efforts are crucial in restoring public trust and ensuring that taxpayer funds are utilized effectively and responsibly.

We recognize that there is more work to be done. The journey toward improving our procurement processes and ensuring the efficient use of public funds is ongoing. However, it is important for Canadians to know that these steps toward corrective action are not merely planned; they are already in motion.

As we move forward, we will continue to support the ongoing work of investigators and auditors. We welcome their recommendations and are committed to implementing them to strengthen our procurement practices further. The Government of Canada remains

Business of Supply

resolute in its pledge to uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, process integrity and value for money in all its endeavours.

Let me reiterate our unwavering dedication to learning from the ArriveCAN experience. Our goal is to ensure that our responses to any challenges are both effective and aligned with the prudent management of public resources.

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in debating this, I have tried to break this into two components. One is on the procurement process. The member provided a lot of positive thoughts with respect to that issue. The other one is related to how a company such as GC Strategies has been able to get to the point where it can get those sorts of contracts. I made the suggestion that we look at the origins of the company, which goes back a number of years. It is the same company but it just changed its name.

Is there merit in looking at how an individual company was able to come virtually from nowhere a decade ago to the point where it is today?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, that is the essence. The essence was that there were practices in procurement that fostered a two-man company, dating back decades, to find ways to become a preferred client of the Government of Canada and through that preferential treatment being able to source resources, individuals, to serve whether it is this government, the government before or the department during the time that is needed.

It goes back to what we should be doing, and I hope we will do it, which is re-evaluating our procurement processes so it is not such a lengthy time, and also accounts for other individuals who actually do the work to speed up the process of engaging with the government.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my constituents sent me to the House so we could become accountable on how we spent their valued tax dollars.

Would the hon. member please tell the residents of Canada why the government is not prepared to release all the documents to ensure that the funds that were spent were spent efficiently? This is not the case and unless we can become accountable, we cannot report that back to our constituents.

Could he please explain that?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, very much as my hon. colleague is proud to represent her constituents, I am also proud to represent my constituents of Richmond Hill.

Business of Supply

The statement that was just made was not completely factual. The fact of the matter is that when the investigations were done, whether it was by the Auditor General or the procurement ombudsman, they clearly indicated that any time they requested documents, the government, the department, was forthcoming with all the documents that were available. The statement just made is misrepresenting what the government has done and also misrepresenting the results of the investigation. As such, the member is misrepresenting the facts to the Canadian people.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, government outsourcing to the big six consultants went from \$119 million pre-pandemic to over \$470 million last year, and the ArriveCAN scandal is just the tip of the iceberg. The big challenge we are facing is that both Liberal and Conservative governments have chosen to privatize the work of government.

Can my colleague across the way explain how government outsourcing has ballooned by over four times over the last number of years?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, it is true that consulting services have ballooned over the last eight years we have been in power, but we have to be able to clearly explain to Canadians why this has happened. It has happened because our government has a very clear vision around where we want to take Canada. For that to happen, we need to make sure that as we transition our department and roll out a digital strategy, we have the best practices and the benchmarks to be able to ensure the pathway we develop for that transition is the right pathway. Where most of these consulting services have gone is to making sure we understand which jurisdictions are the best, where we need to benchmark and get data, and how to develop a path forward. That is where the money has been spent, and that is where the value of the money is, because we have a clear vision of where we want to take Canada.

• (1540)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always wonderful to rise in this most honourable House to speak on various topics, and today, the opposition motion.

If we remember the period of 2021 and the global pandemic, our government undertook a number of measures to both protect Canadians and assist Canadians. We protected Canadians by receiving and contracting for vaccines and getting personal protective equipment, and we assisted Canadians, Canadian workers and Canadian businesses through the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the CERB and a number of other measures. We literally kept a part of the economy going that was basically frozen due to the pandemic, and, working with our provincial colleagues, that allowed us to come out of the pandemic faster and stronger than any other country across the G7, across our developed partners. We see the results today in our employment numbers and our unemployment rate, in our GDP growth and in where the country is going. We had the backs of Canadians during the pandemic; we will always have the backs of Canadians, and we did the right thing.

With regard to today's opposition motion, let me make a few comments.

[Translation]

I want to begin by saying that our government is committed to protecting the integrity of the federal procurement process. The recent allegations related to the procurement of professional services for the ArriveCAN app are simply unacceptable. The Auditor General and the procurement ombud have uncovered inappropriate conduct on the part of some suppliers and some government officials.

While investigations are still under way into what happened in these cases, we are acting now on behalf of Canadians and implementing the recommendations of the Auditor General and the procurement ombud.

I want to reiterate that our government is deeply concerned about the allegations regarding the procurement of IT services for the ArriveCAN app. Furthermore, taxpayers have the right to ask tough questions about how public funds were spent.

While important questions have been raised about the conduct of a handful of public servants during the ArriveCAN procurement process, I want to emphasize that Canada was facing an emergency at the time and that so many others in the public service stepped up to meet the needs.

In the spring of 2020, we were faced with one of the most serious public health crises our country has ever seen. I am proud to say that our government made every effort to protect Canadians by purchasing essential supplies and services. Meeting the needs of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic was a monumental task on many fronts, for the government and for the world.

Public servants worked non-stop to support our frontline health care professionals and all those keeping Canadians safe. From the beginning, public servants followed a deliberate, strategic and comprehensive plan that helped Canada get results.

[English]

We can all take pride in the fact that our focused approach allowed Canada to secure a supply of vaccines and personal protective equipment when we needed them most and to ultimately get us out of the pandemic. Yes, I do believe in vaccinations; I do believe in science, and I do believe in doctors. We supplied those vaccines to Canadians, and we protected Canadians. Unfortunately, we had about 57,000 Canadians pass away due to COVID and its impact, but we protected millions.

• (1545)

[Translation]

In fact, Canada was a world leader on this front, thanks to the hard work of many Canadians across the country. We acted quickly, because we had to, but that does not excuse the mismanagement that has been uncovered with respect to the ArriveCAN app.

I want to assure the House and all Canadians that the findings of the Auditor General and the procurement ombud are being taken seriously and that we trust our law enforcement agencies, such as the RCMP, to investigate any wrongdoing.

Let me be absolutely clear on the fact that any criminal wrongdoing will lead to consequences. Our government's goal now is to strengthen certain aspects of the federal procurement system, and I know that public servants will use these lessons learned to improve the way they do business with contractors.

Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, is the central purchasing agent for the government and has an important role to play here. For ArriveCAN, PSPC provided support to the Canada Border Services Agency with contracting tools and lists of suppliers that could be used for the project. It was incumbent on the CBSA to define the requirements for ArriveCAN and to manage the ArriveCAN development and maintenance contracts, based on the policy direction provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Even though greater flexibility in procurement allows us to be more agile, especially in times of crisis, it is clear that the governance and monitoring around procurement needs to be improved. I want the House to know that PSPC has already taken measures to strengthen its processes and review its functions. In November, PSPC informed every government department and agency that it was adopting new, stricter measures, introducing a common set of principles and mandatory procedures that they must abide by to use PSPC's professional services contracting instruments.

These measures will enable PSPC to improve the evaluation requirements to ensure that resources are qualified, to demand more transparency from suppliers regarding their prices and use of sub-contractors, to improve documentation when contracts are awarded and task authorizations are issued, to clarify the work requirements and activities, to specify the initiatives and projects being worked on, and to assess the resources just before the work begins to ensure that the services are indeed being provided by the proposed resources.

I would also like to mention the action our government is taking to improve and strengthen the integrity regime. Our government introduced the integrity regime in 2015 to foster ethical business practices, ensure due process and uphold the public trust. The integrity regime is always being improved and strengthened, including when it comes to fraud, and PSPC continually strives to ensure that we hold suppliers accountable for any misconduct.

On an ongoing basis, PSPC proactively uses data analysis to identify any inappropriate conduct and investigate any potential wrongdoing in contracts. If an investigation uncovers any wrongdoing, PSPC informs law enforcement so that a criminal investigation can be conducted. The department also seeks to recover the funds when wrongdoing is discovered.

In conclusion, I must emphasize that we are committed to using an open, fair and transparent procurement process while obtaining the best possible value for Canadian taxpayers. The ArriveCAN app was put in place to protect Canadians. It enabled us to keep Canadians safe by managing public health measures at the border in a time of crisis. It was absolutely necessary. Without that essential

Business of Supply

tool, Canada's ability to deploy the border measures necessary to protect public health would have been significantly diminished.

• (1550)

[English]

I look forward to questions and comments, and I hope everyone is having a great afternoon.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. It always seems as though I am rising when my friend and colleague is speaking.

One of the things that really strikes me about the ArriveCAN app and all that has gone wrong is that the Liberals seem to be saying there is nothing to see here as they have done absolutely everything, yet the key thing they did was the doubling of outsourcing. The second thing is that the Liberals have failed to spot this. There should have been a glaring red light saying stop and yet here we are today with this motion.

First, will he be supporting our motion? Second, how can we trust the Liberal government in light of those things?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo from the interior of British Columbia, I have said before that our families have known each other for about six decades since our parents immigrated to Canada. The hon. member and I both know the value of a dollar and how hard it is to work and save that dollar.

We need to make sure the processes in place in government are robust and effective. Where things have gone wrong, where there have been actions, criminal or not, where taxpayer dollars have been utilized by whomever, there needs to be an investigation. There needs to be transparency.

Literally thousands of documents have been turned over to, I think, the OGGO committee. If the RCMP or any other organization needs to be called upon, we will get to the bottom of it. It is important for me, it is important for the hon. member and it is important for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, who was at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics this morning.

Business of Supply

When I look at ArriveCAN, I see the latest in a long line of fiascos. I recall the government was having a hard time delivering passports. It is having a hard time with immigration. It is having a hard time with a lot of programs. It is losing internal expertise. It is relying on outside consultants. It is unable to control them.

I wonder, will my colleague admit that his government is utterly incompetent?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is a very strange question.

Since 2015, we have introduced many measures to help the middle class.

[*English*]

Some of those measures are the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit and a national day care plan. We responded to a crisis, the pandemic. We have responded to the war in Ukraine. We finalized CETA. We have put CUSMA in place.

Our government has had the backs of Canadians since 2015. I could list about 40 or 50 items that I would be more than happy to send the hon. member. I know they are helping Canadians, Quebecers, Ontarians and folks across this country. We will continue to do the good work that our residents and Canadians elected us to do.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, before this I was the executive director of a non-profit and I remember when we wrote proposals to the federal government. We had to define every single thing that went under office supplies. If we missed anything we would not be reimbursed for it.

I see this corporate greed where both Conservatives and Liberals have a long history of just giving money over. The truth is that in 2015 to 2016, Deloitte received \$11 million, already an amazing amount of money, from the Conservatives, and then from 2020 to 2023 that shot up to \$275 million. What does Deloitte have that is interesting for everybody in this country? They have one former minister from the Liberals working there and one former minister from the Conservatives working there.

When will either of these parties stand up for working people and stop defending their corporate friends?

• (1555)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, when we came to government in 2015, the Conservatives had cut so many budgets and so many employees that we needed to bring in folks with subject matter expertise so that we could provide the services that Canadians needed, to make sure that we had services.

We could go through a litany of cuts that were done by the past Conservative government. They are all listed there. Colleagues can look at the public accounts and so forth as to the number of people laid off and budget cuts made in some departments, including the CBSA. The Conservatives were the best at cutting, “cut, cut, cut” as some of our ministers have said. We needed to bring in subject matter expertise, which a lot of these consulting firms have. Sometimes we do need that. We understand that.

We will always have the backs of middle-class Canadians in my riding and across this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Brantford—Brant.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to acknowledge the great French spoken by my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge, who gave his entire speech in French. I wanted to point that out because it is greatly appreciated by all francophones in the House when our colleagues give speeches in the language of Molière.

The common-sense plan of the Conservative Party, the official opposition, is to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Why, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, which we now know is increasingly supported by the Bloc Québécois, do we need a plan that seems so simple? It is because this government has failed at every turn.

The government has failed to stand up for Canadians and the much-vaunted middle class, while Canadians are turning to food banks. There are two million Canadians a month going to food banks. It is so serious that food banks in the regions do not have enough food to feed the people lining up outside their doors.

Worse still, today we learned from a report by Second Harvest that one million more people are expected to use food banks in the coming months. This situation is unacceptable. This is where eight years of this Liberal government has gotten us, with the help of the NDP and, as we have heard before and as I will discuss again later on, with the help of the Bloc Québécois.

Today's opposition motion is an example of what we would rather not be doing. We would like to talk more about Canadians who are unable to afford a home, about young Canadians who cannot imagine a day when they could afford a home, about Canadians who are using food banks or families forced to make hard choices at the grocery store.

Nevertheless, here we are again, forced to talk about a Liberal scandal. This time, the Liberal scandal stems from a report by the Auditor General of Canada. The report was requested by the opposition parties in November 2022, over a year ago. This damning and disastrous report focuses on the government's failure to properly manage public finances.

I have the report in my hands. Honestly, I think I am going to ask for the permission and unanimous consent of the House to table it, along with my notes. I have included so many notes about what went wrong with the ArriveCAN app that the Liberals would do well to take a look.

I can see that my colleague from Winnipeg North is quite anxious to see my notes. At the end of my speech, I will probably ask for the report to be tabled so he can read it and maybe change his position. Maybe the member for Winnipeg North will tell his Prime Minister to be transparent for once. When the RCMP calls the Prime Minister's office, which it has not yet done, to ask if it would be possible to get access to all the documents in his possession regarding the ArriveCAN app, he should not hide behind cabinet confidence and refuse to hand over these documents.

Today, during question period, we heard the ministers answer our questions about the arrive scam app, saying that they would collaborate and that they have always been co-operative in all the investigations. That is the problem: the RCMP's numerous investigations into the Prime Minister's actions.

This morning, the RCMP commissioner appeared before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I sit on that committee with my colleague from Brantford—Brant. We were not really surprised to learn that the Prime Minister's Office was not very co-operative when it came time to release the documents. It did not want to waive cabinet confidence in the Aga Khan island case or in the SNC-Lavalin case. As a result, the RCMP commissioner and the investigator who was accompanying him told us that they could not definitively absolve the Prime Minister of having committed a crime because they did not get access to all the information.

The commissioner made it very clear that the RCMP could not say whether a crime was committed in the SNC-Lavalin case because it did not have access to all the information. He was asked another question: Are we to understand that the Prime Minister did not commit a crime?

• (1600)

The commissioner was quick to say that the RCMP could not say that either, because it did not have access to the information that would have enabled it to do so. That is unbelievable. Today, the ministers were quick to tell us that they would pass on the information about ArriveCAN.

In another scandal, a committee mainly made up of Liberal MPs and external people that was working on the much-talked-about case of the Winnipeg lab concluded that all of the documents should be made public, because this situation affected all Canadians and because the subjects did not really impact national security. This decision was made a few days ago. Where are the documents? They are not even capable of releasing and disclosing documents that a committee determined would not jeopardize national security. Members will have to forgive me if I am a little skeptical about the Prime Minister's willingness to get to the bottom of what happened with ArriveCAN.

There is a reason we moved this motion today. The government should have paid \$60,000 for an app that ended up costing Canadian taxpayers at least \$60 million—maybe more; we do not know yet. Meanwhile, Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, keep a roof over their heads and make ends meet, so we cannot let this slide. I think the Liberals need to be transparent for once.

Business of Supply

Today, the RCMP confirmed that it is investigating the entire ArriveCAN affair, not just the allegations that public servants reported. The RCMP is investigating everything in the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General was very critical of the government. I will quote a couple of sentences from the report. There is so much in the report that 10 minutes is not enough time to cover it all.

The “At a Glance” section states:

The Canada Border Services Agency's documentation, financial records, and controls were so poor that we were unable to determine the precise cost of the ArriveCAN application.

It goes on to say:

...we are concerned that essential information, such as clear deliverables...was missing. We found that details about the work performed were often missing on invoices and supporting time sheets submitted by contractors that the agency approved.

So far, I am still in the “At a Glance” section. To continue:

We found no evidence to show that some Canada Border Services Agency employees complied with the agency's Code of Conduct by disclosing that they had been invited to dinners and other activities by contractors.

It also says:

There was no formal agreement between the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency from April 2020 to July 2021...

It also states:

We estimated that the average per diem cost for the ArriveCAN external resources was \$1,090, whereas the average daily cost for equivalent IT positions in the Government of Canada was \$675.

This continues on every page of the report:

Canada Border Services Agency officials have expressed concerns that \$12.2 million of the \$[60]-million estimate could be unrelated to ArriveCAN.

They managed to spend money on an app, but that money did not even go to ArriveCAN, and no one can say where the money went. That is what eight years of Liberal management looks like.

I could go on and on. This quote is really telling. In the section entitled “Missing documentation for non-competitive contracts”, it states, “We found that documentation was missing on the initial discussions and interactions between the Canada Border Services Agency and GC Strategies”. GC Strategies is a two-person company that operates out of a basement and gets IT contracts, but has no IT expertise.

This is just a glimpse of the Auditor General's scathing, damning report on ArriveCAN.

• (1605)

I think that the government needs to show more respect for Canadians. It must disclose the costs related to the app by March 18. That is the goal of our motion today.

Business of Supply

If the Liberals have any respect for Canadians, then they will vote in favour of our motion.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, they have to recognize the irony. The member just finished calling into question the integrity of GC Strategies; I do not blame him, quite frankly, for doing that. What the member does not necessarily realize is that it is the very same company, just with a name change. The two people he has just criticized are the same people who ran Coredal Systems Consulting. By the way, his leader actually gave millions of dollars in contracts to them. Can he not see a bit of irony there?

Does the member not agree that maybe we should be looking at how one company was able to evolve to the point where we have the problem that we have today? There is no doubt that the member's leader played some role in it.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: That is appalling, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition was clear today. Yes, we need to investigate all of the contracts that were awarded. The member for Winnipeg North is talking about a few million dollars under the Conservatives. Yes, he is right.

However, we are talking about a total of \$250 million that this government allegedly paid to GC Strategies, \$250 million. The Liberals doubled the amounts that are given to consultants. They are now spending \$20 billion a year on consultants when the public service has grown in size.

I think it is rather ironic to hear the member for Winnipeg North trying to lecture us when I have in front of me the report on ArriveCAN that indicates that the Liberals have no control over public spending.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I like precision, transparency and education. It worries me when members spread misinformation by voluntarily leaving information out. At least, I hope it is voluntary.

In December 2021, less than three months after an election that all opposition parties and the media considered unnecessary, we passed Supplementary Estimates (C). We did not vote on each individual appropriation as we did last December. We voted on all of them, and they were fast-tracked. Yes, my colleague voted against ArriveCAN, but he also voted against indigenous women's shelters, support for festivals and tourism, community revitalization, mental health supports, support for Afghan nationals and the purchase of personal protective equipment. Eight times he voted against that.

Does he not see the plank in his own eye?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the plank is in the eye of the person who just asked me if I could see the plank in mine.

We did indeed vote against that, but it was a vote of non-confidence in this government because even then we already had doubts about its ability to manage public money, Canadians' money.

My colleague's position is to defend the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who said, "We are not going to scrutinize everything the government spends. We just tell it to go ahead and hand out the money".

If that is how the Bloc Québécois is going to run a country, I think it is going to have a hard time balancing its budget.

● (1610)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier, a Liberal member said that the Conservative government laid off nearly 37,000 federal public servants to finance its promised tax cuts, reducing the government's internal resources. The Conservatives are therefore responsible for the rising costs of outsourcing.

I am curious. I would like to hear my colleague's suggestions about all the contracts and all the problems we are seeing now.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the problem is that the NDP blindly supports all of this government's financial decisions.

There are more civil servants and there are more subcontractors. Unfortunately, services are worse than they were prior to 2015. Every Canadian in every riding can confirm this. People are lining up for passports. People are waiting months and weeks for Service Canada. People are waiting weeks for immigration.

I think the NDP should show some restraint before they start throwing stones.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will start with a caveat. I have been involved in so many committees looking at this particular scam that it will be a real challenge to keep my comments to 10 minutes. I could literally speak for hours, but I am happy to highlight some of the important points today.

I will start by reiterating our common-sense plan. As Conservatives, we will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. After eight years, with a worn-out, tired Liberal-NDP government, Canadians have endured unprecedented levels of corruption.

Today, we are debating the Conservative motion that calls on the Liberal government to table the full cost of the arrive scam app within 100 days from today's date and to reclaim all money that was paid to contractors and subcontractors who performed no work. This is the app, according to the Prime Minister, that should have cost the taxpayer \$80,000, but now we have the Auditor General guessing at an amount of \$60 million. It could be \$70 million or \$80 million. We do not know how much more than \$60 million, but we do know that it is at least 750 times more than the original cost.

I have been keeping track for several weeks now; several ministers, if not members of the backbench, have commented that, if the rules were broken and there was malfeasance or criminality, those responsible will be held accountable for their actions. What we have not heard at all is any minister, including the Prime Minister, indicating in the House that the buck stops with the government. Where was the Prime Minister? Where was the Minister of Public Services and Procurement?

Where were all those ministers for a period of three-plus years? Were they completely tone deaf? Were they completely derelict in their responsibility, asleep at the wheel? Were they simply complic- it with fleecing the Canadian taxpayer of at least \$60 million?

Why is that important? It is because they need to look themselves in the mirror and say to Canadians that they did not provide the appropriate ministerial oversight.

I have heard from deputy ministers and from several presidents of the impugned agencies, as laid out in the Auditor General's report. Every one of them confirmed regular, consistent, numerous discussions with the appropriate minister.

Surely, all of them, including the Prime Minister, knew how badly out of control this arrive scam was going. They had the opportunity to rein in this out-of-control spending and stop the criminality, but they did not.

That is what Canadians should be most appalled about, not necessarily just our professional public servants and those individuals they contracted with, such as GC Strategies. They are under investigation. Quite frankly, the government and the Prime Minister need to be under investigation.

We all know what is going to happen; we knew about it in the Aga Khan scandal and the SNC-Lavalin scandal. There is a two-tiered level of justice when it comes to dealing with government misconduct, potential government criminality and potential criminality involving the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has the luxury of hiding behind cabinet confidentiality.

Today, in the ethics committee, I put it this way to the RCMP commissioner: Are Canadians to believe that the Prime Minister can engage in a whole host of criminal activities and simply hide behind the shield of cabinet confidentiality? He did not have a good response, I will admit. Certainly, that is what it looks like.

As a former Crown prosecutor, I can say that there was ample evidence to support the charge of obstruction of justice by the Prime Minister in his campaign of trying to influence the actions of the first indigenous attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould. However, again, the government would not release the documents. It would not release them to the Ethics Commissioner and certainly not to the RCMP.

However, the government talks about how independent the RCMP is. It talks about how it is going to be transparent and accountable. The Prime Minister promised Canadians that in 2015.

Madam Speaker, look at the mess they have created in the last eight years. They are the most corrupt government this country has ever seen. There is no question about that.

Business of Supply

The member for Winnipeg North can laugh all he wants; he knows it is the truth. He knows how difficult it is, day after day, to sit in this House and defend the illegal actions of the government.

• (1615)

I have so much to say here that I do not even know where to begin.

Now the members of the NDP caucus are blindly following along with everything the Liberal government has to say. They are so hypocritical. They will challenge and they will fiercely try to argue that we should be holding the government to account, yet they blindly support it time after time. They voted with the Liberal government on at least eight occasions to continue funding this particular scam. If they had voted no on at least one occasion if not all of those occasions, I certainly would not be standing here today talking about the scandal and its cost to the taxpayers.

I will conclude with this. After eight years, the Liberal government has proven itself both financially incompetent and riddled with corruption. Common-sense Conservatives will get to the bottom of the scandal and bring home accountability for taxpayers.

Therefore I stand in the House today, along with my Conservative colleagues, to hold the government accountable for its reckless and irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars. Conservatives demand that the government take decisive action to recover all funds paid to the ArriveCAN contractors, and most importantly the subcontractors, who failed to deliver on their obligations. We are asking for that within 100 days of the motion's being adopted. We are calling on the Prime Minister to present a comprehensive report to the House demonstrating the successful repayment of the taxpayer funds.

This motion is a crucial step in bringing home accountability for Canadians, and it is well within the federal government's mandate. With a commitment to common-sense governance, Conservatives are steadfast in unravelling the scandal and restoring accountability for taxpayers. I encourage all members of the House to stand and support our common-sense motion.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the word that comes to mind is "wow". That is quite the extreme statement coming from the member. So much for facts. I hope he does not believe 90% of the things he said.

The question that comes to mind is this. I wonder whether he would hold the very same standard to his own leader, who was responsible for the issuing of millions of dollars in contracts to Coredal Systems Consulting Inc., the very same people who are with GC Strategies. Would he apply the same principles to the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada that he is applying to others? Maybe he should skip the character assassinations and focus on the issue.

Business of Supply

If he is not going to answer that question, maybe he could offer an idea from Conservatives as to how we can improve the procurement process.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I stand 100% on every word that I said in my speech. I will defend that inside and outside the House, and I will continue to use the same talking points. That is how I respond to my friend's question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of working with my colleague at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and since October 2022 we have been studying the issue of ArriveCAN, with its tens of thousands of pages to read. It is fascinating.

A notice of motion was introduced about Coredal Systems Consulting, which had the same owners as GC Strategies. I wonder how many other businesses we should be looking into.

Does my colleague think that the system that was exposed through ArriveCAN might be even bigger and more widespread than we might think?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I too enjoy working with my friend on a number of committees. I always value her sage advice, her thoughtful questions and the probing way she too wants to get to the bottom of this. I think she touched upon a very important point.

We are basically speaking in the House about GC Strategies and what it did to the procurement process within the arrive scam context. However, with respect to the broader point and to respond to my colleague, I think it is symbolic of what has been allowed to occur with the corrupt Liberal government. If it occurred with arrive scam, one only has to wonder how many other millions, if not billions, of wasted dollars have gone to other similar contractors and subcontractors, so I think there is an excellent opportunity to expand this in many other ways onto many other committees.

• (1625)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, we do know that when the Conservatives were in power, they gave over \$7 million to GC Strategies under its former name. We know that \$4 million of those contracts was awarded when the Leader of the Opposition was the parliamentary secretary, and of course we know that the Phoenix scandal, which the Auditor General has compared to ArriveCAN, has the same sort of scandal behind it. Phoenix, of course, was done under the Conservatives' government.

I have a question for the member, though. I appreciate the discussion today and have no problem going after GC Strategies, but I am interested to hear whether the member thinks we should also be looking at McKinsey & Company, Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Accenture, KPMG and Ernst and Young, which are also getting millions and millions of taxpayer dollars.

I am just wondering.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, if there was impropriety in the awarding of those contracts, or any suspicions of criminality, yes, we should be looking at that.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport. It will be my pleasure to share my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

I have some prepared remarks, but first I want to provide a bit of context for those who might be listening. I want to go into a few details about the motion that is before us today. In terms of context, we are going to be talking about the ArriveCAN app. For members of the public who might have forgotten, the ArriveCAN app was a key tool in protecting Canadians during the pandemic as we went travelling.

As we have come out of the pandemic, sometimes I think we have forgotten how intense a time it was and how historic a time it was. Literally, the world shut down on March 15, 2020. Professor Adam Tooze, Columbia University, wrote a book called *Shutdown*. He said that the first half of 2020 was historic; 95% of the world's economies suffered a simultaneous contraction. He said that had never happened before. Three billion adults were furloughed from their jobs or tried to work from home, and that had also never happened before. The sum of lost earnings just in the first months of the pandemic was \$10 trillion U.S., more than a tenth of the global GDP.

The global economy was shut down, and the Canadian government was trying to grapple with what COVID-19 was, how we were going to keep Canadians safe, how we were going to ensure that people would be able to pay their bills, how we could protect Canadians, and how we could help our small and large businesses, our societies and our cities. That is what we were consumed with at the time.

People will recall that we were moving quickly and making lots of decisions, because we had to move quickly. The regular processes we had in place were not followed all of the time. A lot of the decisions around the ArriveCAN app happened during this time. It is important for us to remember that context.

The motion before us is an opposition day motion. Basically, it is asking for a lot of documentation around the ArriveCAN app to be tabled here in the House of Commons, in terms of the decision-making. There is also a portion about recouping all of the funds that were paid to develop the ArriveCAN app.

I will not be supporting the motion. The reason for that is that there are already a number of independent investigations under way right now, and we have to allow time for those investigations to be completed. They are being done by outstanding, independent organizations. Also, we have already heard from the Auditor General, and there are already a number of steps being taken. I believe there are some recommendations from the procurement ombud. I will go through a couple of those items right now.

CBSA has committed to implementing every recommendation set out by the Auditor General's report, as well as by the similar report by the procurement ombud. In addition to all of these independent reports, CBSA is also conducting an internal audit to assess the procurement practices. Where specific allegations of misconduct have been made, CBSA has launched an investigation that is still in process and has referred all allegations to the RCMP. A lot of work is under way. The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates is also looking into it. It is right for all of these investigations to be under way, particularly when there are concerns about anything that we are doing from a procurement perspective.

I am now going to move into my prepared remarks on government procurement.

The federal government is committed to ensuring that the procurement of goods and services is done in a fair, open and transparent manner, and, crucially, in accordance with policies, regulations, guidelines, trade agreements and procedures. Legislation, including the Financial Administration Act, along with Treasury Board policies, establishes clear requirements for the administration of government, including for contracting activities.

The Financial Administration Act sets out the requirements needed when the government is making public disbursements, which include contracts. For example, section 32 requires that funds be available before entering into a contract. Section 33 deals with ensuring that payments are lawful charges against the appropriation and that the appropriation is not exceeded.

• (1630)

The Treasury Board Secretariat, through the office of the comptroller general, provides government-wide direction to support the implementation of mandatory Treasury Board policies related to financial management and the management of assets and acquired services. The Treasury Board sets the administrative policies for federal procurement, guided by the principles of fairness, openness, transparency, competition, and integrity, all while ensuring best value.

For example, its directive on the management of procurement lays out the expectations and requirements that departments and agencies must follow so their procurements are managed in a way that supports the delivery of programs and services to Canadians. It is also managed in a way that will demonstrate the best value and in a way that is consistent with the Government of Canada's socio-economic and environmental objectives. This framework supports the management of procurement so it is fair, open and transparent.

There are also clearly defined responsibilities for government departments when conducting procurements, including those for services. First and foremost, government departments and agencies are expected to maintain the integrity of the procurement process and protect government spending from fraud and unethical business practices. This is done through internal processes and controls and through dedicated procurement professionals and effective mechanisms for the disclosure of any wrongdoing.

Second, government departments and agencies are responsible for clearly defining the intended outcomes of a procurement, in-

Business of Supply

cluding operational requirements, expected benefits and how those outcomes align with the government's strategic direction and total costs over the life cycle.

The Government of Canada has clear rules and controls in place to ensure contracting is done in an ethical manner and upholds the values and ethics of the public service. In the public service, like elsewhere in society, when governing rules are broken, there are consequences and corrective measures are taken. Just as getting best value is built into the contracting procedures, so is accountability for the spending of public money. For instance, all proposals are required to be reviewed through a conflict of interest lens and evaluators are required to recuse themselves for real or possible conflicts.

There is also the code of conduct for procurement, which sets out clear expectations for vendors and their subcontractors in the areas of human rights, labour standards, conflict of interest and environmental responsibility. That means the government is committed to upholding and promoting the high standards and values Canadians expect, and the same is expected from vendors and their subcontractors.

I would also remind the House that the government's integrity regime serves to hold suppliers accountable for misconduct. The integrity regime helps foster ethical business practices, ensures due process and upholds the public trust. Public trust is gained through transparency. That is why government contracts over \$10,000 are publicly disclosed on the open government portal, so Canadians are better able to hold the government and public sector officials accountable. The name of the company, the value of the contract and a description of the work are all publicly available.

In conclusion, I want to assure everyone in the House, and indeed across Canada, that the government takes all concerns regarding contracting and consultants seriously. The Government of Canada has a strong framework of rules to direct how procurements need to be conducted, and it is constantly looking at strengthening and clarifying those rules. It also offers guidance and training to employees to ensure they know, understand and obey these rules.

I talked about trust earlier, and that is certainly the foundation of any public institution. It is crucial for Canadians to trust their public institutions. It is also vital for them to trust the employees who support those institutions. Furthermore, it is essential they trust that any procurement conducted on their behalf is done ethically, fairly, openly and transparently. Upholding that trust is vital to any public institution in this country.

Business of Supply

The federal government is committed to ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly in a way that provides value for Canadians, and it will continue to advance the priorities of Canadians.

• (1635)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague said very clearly that she would not be supporting this motion because other investigations are ongoing, but one of the key points of this motion calls on the government to collect and recoup all funds paid to ArriveCAN contractors and subcontractors. When we are talking about having trust in the government, which she spoke of at the end of her speech, and trust in the institutions, the trust of managing finances is certainly a huge part of that. Why does she not believe it is incumbent upon the House to ask for the recoupment of that money so trust can be ensured?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, there may be a point in the future when it would be appropriate to re-collect some of those funds back from contractors. However, what I would say right now is that there are a number of investigations under way: the investigations through the RCMP and the investigations through the other independent bodies through the House. They might, in the end, make some conclusions to say there are some monies that are owed back to the Government of Canada, but I would like those investigations to be concluded before we ask for any funds to be returned.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, one time in the not-too-distant past, we put forward a motion in the House to have the Auditor General study the ArriveCAN fiasco. With respect, the member voted against having the Auditor General do that work. I wonder if the member now regrets taking that position and, if she had it back, whether she would vote for the Auditor General to do that study.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I recall that, during the pandemic, there was a series of votes that came to the House about audits for small businesses and the various things we were spending on while the pandemic was under way. I recall that there were a number of times that I did not vote for those audits to take place, and the reason was that we were still heavily into the pandemic and we needed to make sure that we were focusing our resources on ensuring that we were supporting Canadians, from a health care perspective and from an economic perspective.

There are limited resources within our bureaucracy, so we had to focus our resources. It was never meant that there should ever not be proper oversight or proper spending of our public resources.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have been talking about procurement and ArriveCAN. There were plenty of disasters before ArriveCAN. When we look at the government's real capacity to manage passports, borders, when we look at WE Charity or employment insurance, Canada Life, we realize one thing: the government is incapable of carrying out its fundamental duty, which is to provide services to the public.

I have seen my colleague and his colleagues show some contrition many times. They say they are sorry, that this will never happen again, that the investigations are under way. In reality, these incidents occur on a regular basis.

Earlier my colleague talked about ethics. I would like to know what she thinks, ethically speaking, about these endless scandals.

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, misconduct of any kind in our procurement processes is never acceptable. For about 10 minutes, I gave a speech about all the things we have in place that will protect processes. They do everything they can to inform our bureaucracy and our government officials, who act on behalf of our government, to ensure that they have processes in place such that we are doing our best to spend our public money ethically. When things go wrong, we have a number of mechanisms that allow us to look at what went wrong and how we can do better the next time around.

I started my whole speech by giving some context. We went through a huge pandemic that had huge economic consequences on our lives and in the world today. Surely there were going to be some mistakes made, and it is right for us to be looking at that right now. We will make some corrections and do better as we move forward.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Foreign Affairs; and the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Agriculture and Agri-Food.

[English]

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government takes its responsibility for the stewardship of public funds very seriously, and we are committed to ensuring that government spending stands up to the highest levels of scrutiny. Contracting for goods and services is a routine part of business in any government. It enables us to deliver the services and programs that Canadians need and expect, and we have important guardrails in place to maintain the integrity of the process.

Government procurement is carried out in accordance with a number of regulations, trade agreements, policies, procedures and guidelines. This is the governing framework when it comes to federal procurement that public servants are expected to follow. Even in a time of crisis, such as what we faced during the global pandemic, basic rules must be followed to ensure that we are getting value for money while meeting the needs of Canadians, as urgent as those needs may be. Clearly, that did not happen in the case of ArriveCAN.

Business of Supply

The revelations brought forth by the Auditor General and the procurement ombudsman are deeply troubling, to say the least. I think we can all agree with that. We know that there are other investigations under way, which we fully support, so we can get to the bottom of this issue. I can assure the House that any wrongdoing will be addressed. In the meantime, we owe it to Canadians to immediately act upon the recommendations of the Auditor General and the procurement ombudsman, and that is precisely what our government is doing.

Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, as it is commonly known, plays an important role in these matters. When it comes to deciding whether to contract out certain projects, the government takes many factors into consideration. It starts with the proposition that contractors are there to support the good work of our world-class public servants. Where it is determined that there is need for professional services, PSPC then works as the federal government's central purchasing agent with departments to procure those services in an open, fair and transparent fashion. PSPC procures on behalf of other departments and agencies when requirements are beyond their own contracting authority and advises on the steps needed to ensure that money is well spent.

With regard to ArriveCAN, we know that it was put in place urgently to track and trace travellers as they crossed the border and limit the spread of COVID-19 within Canada. Public servants acted with extreme urgency on a number of fronts during the early days of the pandemic to keep Canadians safe, and the ArriveCAN app was a critical tool at that time. I want to be clear that the issues with ArriveCAN should not reflect on the public service's overall response to the pandemic. It should be proud of its work to procure vital supplies, as well as the vaccines, that ultimately helped lift Canada out of crisis.

However, unlike those other urgent procurements at the time, it is clear now that the way procurement was done in support of the creation and maintenance of the ArriveCAN app was unacceptable. Indeed, there are many questions surrounding the management and integrity of the government's procurement processes for IT services associated with ArriveCAN.

For its part, PSPC is already taking action to ensure that lessons learned are turned into concrete action. That means going beyond addressing the specific issues related to any one specific contractor, as important as it is to hold them to account, and fixing the broader issues that have allowed this mismanagement to happen in the first place. In November, PSPC temporarily suspended all delegated authorities, including the authorities of the Canada Border Services Agency, to authorize professional services based on task authorizations. The department also provided direction to its procurement officers to ensure that all task authorizations include a focus on clear tasks and deliverables. We are glad to see that the Auditor General agreed with the actions we have taken.

All federal departments must now formally agree to a new set of terms and conditions to obtain access to select professional service methods of supply. PSPC is also updating its guidance to aid departments in procuring effectively and responsibly when using PSPC's procurement instruments under their own authorities.

• (1645)

Of course, adhering to procurement policies, directives and guidelines is a shared responsibility across government departments and agencies. In the case of ArriveCAN, it is quite clear that a handful of public servants failed on that front. Our government is committed to fixing the system so that cannot happen again.

Let me be clear, when it comes to holding suppliers accountable, PSPC is looking at ways to improve its integrity regime, including with regards to fraud, which will help us take swift action against bad actors for their misconduct. I will note that, on an ongoing basis and as part of the regular business, PSPC proactively seeks to uncover improper conduct and investigates potential wrongdoings in its contracts. Should an investigation reveal wrongdoing, PSPC informs law enforcement for possible criminal investigation. The department also seeks to recover funds when wrongdoing is found.

However, members opposite want to push lies. They say that "Well, we're focused on finding the truth and making sure that those responsible are held accountable—"

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I thought I heard the member say that the members opposite want to push lies. I heard him say that, and he just nodded in the affirmative. I want to ask if that is parliamentary language.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I do not know, I was not paying attention and did not hear it, and so we will have to go back to the Hansard to confirm.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, he said that the opposition was pushing lies.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): He did not call anyone a liar, which is a difference.

I will ask the hon. member to answer to the point of order.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I will say this: The members opposite push mistruths, if I can say it that way.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member cannot say indirectly what cannot be said directly, and so I would invite the member to be more prudent and perhaps apologize to the other members.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House are focused on finding the truth and making sure that those responsible are held accountable—

Business of Supply

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, with respect, you just asked the member to apologize and he did not; he went on with his speech. He called us liars. He needs to apologize or he needs to be removed from the chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would invite the hon. member to apologize so that we can move on.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, my apologies, I am not suggesting that people lie in this House. However, I am suggesting that we are focused on finding the truth and making sure that those responsible are held accountable.

Because the truth is of the utmost importance, I want to set the record straight about some of the less clear messages being spread by the Conservatives. I will give those members across the way the benefit of the doubt for that matter as maybe they confuse the comment sections of their Facebook livestreams with reality.

The truth is that the Office of the Auditor General does not investigate elected officials, it investigates public servants. The findings in the Auditor General's report were unacceptable, which is why the CBSA has referred allegations to the RCMP as well as launched an independent investigation.

Another theory that has been spread is that somehow an app that was designed as a response to the COVID-19 crisis that served Canadians across multiple digital platforms and systems while addressing privacy, security and linguistic requirements would only cost \$80,000. I hope the Conservative colleagues use this opportunity to retract those statements, that is unless they are making a conscious decision to somehow mislead Canadians, because everyone knows that this application never would have cost that amount.

In closing, we are taking action. We know that there is more to do. We accept all recommendations of the procurement ombudsman and the Auditor General, and we share with Canadians their concern. There is no doubt that the ArriveCAN app was a useful tool in keep Canadians safe, but the allegations related to the procurement of professional services for this app are simply unacceptable. As I have outlined, the government is making important changes to avoid this ever happening again, and we are actively exploring other ways to further strengthen our procurement process.

Before I close, I will reiterate that members of the public service should be proud of the way they supported Canadians during the pandemic, particularly with regards to the urgent procurement of critical supplies and life-saving vaccines. The revelations we are discussing today relate to individuals involved in the procurement of services for a portion of the ArriveCAN app, which should not be a reflection of the hard work of public servants during that time of crisis. We owe it to them, to all Canadians, to make this right by safeguarding the integrity of the federal procurement process, and we are committed to doing just that.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 35—EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS AND CONDUCT OF EXTENDED PROCEEDINGS

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to give notice that, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 35, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APP

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I spend a fair amount of time with that colleague on OGGO on the issue. I appreciate his comments and I take him at his word on his sincerity to address the procurement issues. One of the things that came up from the procurement ombudsman's report is what it calls a bait and switch, where services are proposed but actual services delivered to the government are less than what was in the contract. I wonder if the member can fill us in on what PSPC is doing across the breadth of government to address the bait and switch issues that have been brought forward by the ombudsman.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is a good point. We actually did deliberate that during our committee sessions. We also noted that this practice is constant throughout procurement in industry and various other governments, and certainly it was the case in the Conservative government previously. For the portion of the contract that was provided, oftentimes the employer will determine other relevant activities that are occurring, things change and then they are used for other functions, but that is not a common practice.

In this particular case, because things were being done so quickly and urgently, I think the ombudsman made it clear that there was quite a lot of that switching that was taking place during that moment of crisis. We need to be careful about ensuring that the work that was prescribed and the reasons they were contracted is what they will ultimately do. That is the case in a contract and subcontract basis, which, as I said, is a very common practice throughout the industry.

We are sensitive to the degree of skills and abilities within our civil service to do that work, and when it is not able to, we prescribe outside to do so, and that is what has occurred here.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, working with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, commonly called the mighty OGGO, is a pleasure.

We have ArriveCAN, where there seems to have been some slip-up. I understand that the situation required fast action, but at some point, the slip-ups keep happening. We have ArriveCAN. Before that it was passports. Before that it was the WE Charity. Before that, it keeps going, it was Phoenix. The reason is always the same: We have to move fast, we have to work, we have to get going.

At some point, do we not need to stop, look around, shift the focus to people's qualifications and put down the rubber stamp?

[English]

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I know the Chair is watching us intently and very much likes to address us as “the mighty OGGO”. It is certainly mighty indeed, and the member from the Bloc also does a tremendous and excellent job, and I apologize for not responding to her in French. I wish I could. I am taking lessons, but that speaks to skills. The skill set that you are asking for, and hope the civil service can have, needs to be improved upon. I recognize that I should speak through the Speaker. Maybe she can translate on my behalf to the third official language of the country, as it should be.

The member has commented on the degree of competency, integrity and skill sets within the civil service to do the work, and had that been available to us during the ArriveCAN application, we may have been able to expedite things even more quickly, but that did not exist. The resources were not available to us, we had to procure them and go through a contract system and a subcontract system, similar to what has been done in the past, but we have recognized the ability. We should be improving our internal service for that reason.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really want to talk about the fact that small business has suffered. Over the time that the Liberal government was opening the doors to their friends and their insiders to dole out contracts in a way that was not following protocol, small businesses were left without government contracts. We know right now that the PPE providers who were told by the government that it would purchase that PPE did not get the orders that they were expecting. Right now in my community, one of those PPE suppliers suffered financial losses from the Liberal government not following through with its promises on Canadian-made PPE.

Why is it that the government continues to hand out money to its insiders and leave small businesses, like the ones in my community, without purchase orders?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I recognize the importance of trying to buy more Canadian and provide more Canadian supplier incentives. Certainly, that is something we are trying to address. I believe that part of the framework, when it comes to selections, especially for the new ones to make them suppliers for our procurement, is something that is being looked at. I appreciate that and we

Business of Supply

will certainly continue to do our best to improve upon the tens of thousands of procurement contracts that exist in this government every year.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from OGGO, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I think if we have three OGGOs in a row we will have an OGGO hat trick.

I rise to speak on ArriveCAN. As it has consumed my life for the last year, why not continue to speak about it today on our opposition day motion?

ArriveCAN to me seems to be a symbol of our government's inability to do procurement right and how the procurement practices of the government have descended into chaos. ArriveCAN we know is a hot mess. We have heard of tens of thousands of emails having been deleted and records lost or perhaps not even kept in the first place. We do not know the final cost of ArriveCAN and there are too many opinions out there as to what it actually cost, whether it was \$80,000, \$6 million, \$60 million or, as the Auditor General has said, we do not have the records to actually say what the final cost is.

We have heard of many updates to the program. There were 177. At the same time, we have also heard from the Auditor General and PHAC that the updates were not tested before being rolled out to the public. Of course, we heard of the 10,000 people who were sent into quarantine in error because it apparently was not tested. Whatever the cost was, \$6 million, \$60 million, one would think it would have been tested. At the same time, we also heard from bureaucrats in the CBSA who said that everything was tested, so we have a problem here. We cannot get a straight answer on what went on with ArriveCAN.

I will note that the head of PHAC, when asked about the testing, commented that it was too busy to test it. I can see Air Canada doing that without testing, but can members imagine any other company coming out with an important update that affects the lives of people without testing it? Apparently, the government did not. Again, the problem is that we have not received a straight answer.

Getting back to the ArriveCAN set-up, we heard that there were 177 updates. We knew things were changing during the pandemic, but we did not have 177 changes to help people who were coming across the borders, or 177 different ways to identify whether they had been vaccinated or not. It seems to be that the problem was with the procurement process for all of these changes, each one costing more money, willy-nilly done by PHAC or an order in council from the government without any thought to the consequences.

Business of Supply

As I mentioned in a previous question to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary for public works, we heard the procurement ombudsman talk about bait and switch. If people want to know what bait and switch is, the easiest way for me to explain it is this. Basically, companies promise a higher level of services to the government and then substitute a lower level. Perhaps it would be like someone going to a speaker's service to hire a speaker for an event. The service promises to have the Leader of the Opposition come and therefore will charge a certain amount, but perhaps the member for Edmonton West shows up. Even if the speech is not as good, the client would still have to pay the full amount. That is what is happening and the procurement ombudsman has stated that this bait and switch program is systemic throughout the government.

We also heard how it started as a program within the Public Health Agency of Canada and then transferred over eventually to the CBSA. The program transferred over the work, but it did not seem to transfer over the accountability. All we get is finger-pointing. We have seen people blaming GC Strategies for bidding on and receiving the work. We have blamed Dalian and Coradix for getting the work. When I say "we", I mean the system, the government. We have blamed directors general within the CBSA saying that they were responsible for procurement even though that was not their role, and that they were responsible for the contracts even though it is the chief financial officers who signed. We heard today that the system is to blame.

Do members know that we have not heard from the government who is to blame. What about the ministers? I have to ask: Where was the Minister of Health in all of this when PHAC was spinning out of control and flashing money at the system without any thought to the taxpayers?

• (1700)

Where was the Minister of Public Safety when all these problems were going on with CBSA? Where was the Treasury Board president when, through the supplementary estimates process, money was added? The Treasury Board would have had to approve that submission to begin with. Where was the Treasury Board president to ask where the government was to take responsibility, instead of blaming the contractors or the people within the public service?

I want to read a quote from pm.gc.ca, PM meaning the Prime Minister. This is from the website:

Open and Accountable Government sets out core principles regarding the roles and responsibilities of Ministers in Canada's system of responsible...government. This includes the central tenet of ministerial responsibility...individual and collective....

This is right from the Prime Minister's website. Anyone can google it right now. It is about ministerial responsibility, yet we have none with this. We have \$60 million, perhaps more, perhaps less, spent without a single minister asking once why we were spending so much money, or why we were not testing this program. We should have had several ministers step up when 10,000 Canadians were sent into quarantine in error. They should have followed up and asked why we were not testing it before it was rolled out. Not a single minister stepped up and apologized. Instead, we have public servants being scapegoated, contractors being blamed and a system being blamed, but there is nothing from the ministers.

We also heard how PSPC, in its role as procurement officers for the country, pushed back against CBSA for some excessive things in this program. When CBSA thanked them for the advice but still went ahead with that misguided process, PSPC just shrugged and said that it was nice and that it did its part. Doing its part by simply saying it does not like something and walking away shows that PSPC is not taking its role seriously.

This brings me back to a similar issue with CBSA and PSPC a couple of years ago with the Nuctech scandal. Nuctech is basically the Chinese screening version of Huawei. Worldwide, it provides screeners controlled by the PRC, and CBSA decided it was going to put those machines in every single one of our embassies around the entire country. They are machines that, once they had screened people, would send that information to the Chinese government.

PSPC actually stepped in and said that it was a security concern and that it should not be done. CBSA plowed ahead and did it anyway. Again, we have to ask PSPC what its purpose was if it was not going to stop them and enforce these rules. Funny enough, when it came up at OGGO, when we stepped in and brought this to light, the government's response was to hire Deloitte to do a contract to study the Nuctech issue.

There was \$250,000 outsourced to a management contractor, and it came up with a 24-page fluff report basically stating not to buy sensitive security tech equipment from despotic regimes. Thank heaven for Deloitte, and thank heaven for that \$250,000. Think of how many contracts could have gone to Putin or to Kim Jong-un without the Liberals' and Deloitte's \$250,000 to say not to buy sensitive security equipment from despotic regimes.

It is clear that the Liberal government does not care about taxpayers' money. It is clear that PSPC, CBSA and the ministers are not doing their jobs to follow the rules, to protect taxpayers' money, to ensure that the rules are followed and that we actually have value for money.

The Conservative government will fix this. We will ensure the rules are followed. We will axe the tax. We will build homes. We will fix the budget. We will stop crime. We will fix procurement in this country.

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member did good in terms of the lines, so the programming worked in that sense, I must say.

My question to the member is about something I raised previously with respect to his own leader. The leader of the Conservative Party was the minister ultimately responsible for millions of dollars' worth of grants that went to Coredal Systems Consulting, which is the same company as GC Strategies with just a change in name. The same two individuals are involved in both companies.

Does he believe this should also be considered? Many constituents who we represent are wondering how two individuals get to the point where they were able to do what they did through the procurement process. I think that going back to the origins of the company would be a good thing.

Would he not agree?

• (1710)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for moving on from blaming Harper for all of Canada's problems to blaming someone else. When we talk about ministerial responsibility and when the Prime Minister's website talks about ministerial responsibility, they mean current ministers, not past ministers. The gentleman should direct his question to the Minister of Public Safety, the minister of PHAC and the Treasury Board president, and ask why they did not do their jobs to prevent this scandal.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is clear that the ArriveCAN situation is a disaster.

In my colleague's opinion, rather than blaming the system, should the government not be questioning whether it is itself responsible or even incompetent?

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc is correct. The government should be looking in the mirror and asking what it could do to fix its broken procurement system. Whether it is spending three-quarters of a billion dollars over-budget on the offshore patrol ships that do not work or whether it is giving out billions of dollars to Deloitte and KPMG, the government needs to address the issues, stop pointing outward and start looking in the mirror to see where the issue is, and start addressing the issue.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing the New Democrats agree with the Conservatives on is that it is always wrong when taxpayer dollars are wasted in unnecessary procurement. The structural problem here is a series of successive federal governments that contract out work instead of using the public sector to provide these services. I was in the House when I watched the Conservatives contract out the Phoenix pay system, which was supposed to save \$80 million. It ended up costing over \$2 billion, and it does not even work. Now, we see the Liberals contract out this work to ArriveCAN, and we see similar results.

Business of Supply

Does my hon. colleague not agree with the NDP that it is time we use the talents and the skills of Canada's public servants to deliver these kinds of services, instead of giving money to the private sector contractors who are more interested in profit and the ability to abscond with money than they are in providing real value to the taxpayers of this country?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I agree a tiny bit with my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway's comments. There is some value done that cannot be done internally, but there is a lot being done that should have been done internally.

I will give an example. The government gave three contracts to Deloitte, at \$75,000 per contract, to do RFP fairness assessments for a security contract for the same event on Vancouver Island. This is work that PSPC should be doing: fairness assessments. We do not need to hire outside contractors to tell the government that the work it would be doing follows the rules. The government should just follow the rules, and use the employees we have to ensure the work is done correctly.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Edmonton West for his amazing work. He is one of the few MPs in this House who takes his fiduciary responsibilities to a whole new level. He actually goes through all the public accounts and makes sure that we are spending money wisely. Here we have, right now, the arrive scam situation with over \$19 million going into the hands of two individuals working out of their cottage in the Ottawa suburbs.

We have a Westminster system here where there is supposed to be ministerial accountability, so I would ask the member for Edmonton West this: Who is responsible for it? Is it the President of the Treasury Board; the Minister of Public Services and Procurement; the Minister of Public Safety, who contracted the CBSA to go out there and contract the arrive scam and waste \$60 million on absolutely nothing; or, is it the Prime Minister himself?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, it is all of the above.

• (1715)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

Business of Supply

Today, we are talking about costly criminal corruption, a three-in-one, right at the heart of the government. That is the arrive scam scandal. We found out today that the RCMP is investigating this costly criminal corruption. People are familiar with the arrive scam scandal. I think we should be calling it “the arrive scam scandals”, plural. There are multiple different scandals, and every time, at the public accounts committee and the government operations committee, we turn over a new leaf or a new stone. There is more to uncover, and it speaks to the rot, the crime, the corruption and the capricious disregard for public money that is at the heart of the NDP-Liberal government.

We heard today in committee from watchdogs, from the Auditor General's office, from the procurement ombudsman's office, that they are not at all surprised that the RCMP is investigating criminal behaviour in the context of the arrive scam scandal. We heard ministers in question period today, when they were asked about the RCMP investigation, say that it is no big deal and that of course the RCMP is looking into it.

We have come to a point, in Canada, after eight years of the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government, where ministers will say, unironically, that the RCMP investigating the behaviour of the government is not a big deal. It is true that there have been many different RCMP investigations involving conduct by and within the current government. However, we should never normalize or accept or tolerate, in Canada, the fact that there would be a government that has so debased our public institutions that it thinks it is normal for the RCMP to be investigating its bad behaviour.

What happened in the arrive scam scandal? It is the “arrive scam scandals”. There are many different things at the heart of this problem. We had at least \$60 million spent on an app that should have cost \$80,000. Many of those who worked on this did not actually do any work. GC Strategies, the company that received this contract, got \$20 million for nothing. It simply received the contract and subcontracted it.

We do not just have the problem of the government contracting out work. We have the government contracting out to people who contract out. There are multiple layers and levels of subcontracting. It is essentially a two-person company that received this contract, did no work, had no IT expertise and subcontracted. It went on LinkedIn and found people who could do the work for them. It received \$20 million for searching on LinkedIn.

I think a lot of Canadians would say, “I could get \$20 million for just going on social media and looking for people who could do something”. That is the way this government operates. One gets \$20 million for looking around on LinkedIn, if one is a well-connected insider.

We have no work done and millions of dollars going to GC Strategies for this process of getting contracts and subcontracting. Not only that, we know now, from the Auditor General's report, that the process was rigged. GC Strategies sat down with government officials to determine what the terms of the contract would be, which it would then bid on. The procurement ombudsman revealed that the terms of the contract were designed to drive up costs. They built a system that would incentivize driving up costs and would in-

centivize contractors to ask the government for more money instead of less.

Normal people look for opportunities to spend less when they buy things. This government built a system in which it was in the interests of contractors to charge more instead of less. It built a system that was structurally designed to protect insiders. It was built so that if one was not an insider, one could not get the contract. We have money for nothing, a rigged process, protection for insiders, a process designed to drive up costs.

As part of studying this issue at the government operations committee, we found out about faked résumés. GC Strategies, as part of trying to get work, submitted faked résumés. It said that it changed numbers around in résumés and just sent in the wrong version. However, it admitted under questioning that this insider company, as part of its process, changes numbers on résumés in order to make it compliant with the requirements.

● (1720)

If the government said that it needed someone with five years' experience and the person had five months of experience, GC Strategies' processes would be to change the number to five years to make it compliant, and then they would go back to the original subcontractor or resource and ask if it was okay that they changed the numbers. In one case, they did not even do that. They just sent in the false résumé.

Further, we have instances of tens of thousands of emails being deleted, with the Auditor General saying in so many cases that there is a complete absence of records. The Auditor General cannot confirm if records were destroyed or never existed, although we now have allegations of emails being deleted. We have senior public servants accusing each other of lying to the committee, accusing each other of faking health episodes in order to avoid accountability. We also have reprisals against senior public servants, public servants suspended without pay in the middle of an investigation after they give critical testimony.

That is money for no work; a rigged process and protection for insiders driving up costs; fake résumés; senior officials accusing each other of lying and reprisals among senior public servants. The result of all that was an app that went through 177 versions and sent over 10,000 people into quarantine as a result of a tech glitch, because they could not bother to test it. What a disaster. What a complete and utter disaster this arrive scam fiasco has been. After eight years, the government would say that the RCMP is investigating this whole family of scandals. That is just the way things work.

On this side of the House, we say no. We say that Canadians deserve clean, efficient, effective government and a government, by the way, in which elected leaders take responsibility. Liberals would have us believe that they had nothing to do with this. “Oh, my goodness, can you believe the things that happen to us when we're ministers? All these public servants are doing things that we know nothing about.” Our system is built on the principle of ministerial accountability, which is that ministers are responsible for what happens in their departments and ministers are responsible for the systems they create within their departments.

After eight years, the Prime Minister and his ministers have presided over the complete debasement of efficiency and integrity within the government. They have presided over a dramatic decline in the Government of Canada's ability to do anything efficiently or effectively. We have seen this across many different areas, that the ability of the Canadian state to deliver on basic services, to purchase an app, for example, has dramatically declined. However, the government would have us believe that this dramatic decline over the last years has nothing to do with it.

We have an increase in crime. We have struggles in the cost of living. We have an escalation in corruption. There is the cost, the crime and the corruption, but the government wants us to believe that the people in charge have nothing to do with the outcomes. Who are we going to blame for all these challenges our country is facing? It will not be the people in charge, surely.

We need to go back to a time when we have a government that is willing to take responsibility for what happens under its watch. We have seen this escalation in cost, crime and corruption, and it is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and his government, for what they did and what they fail to do to ensure integrity, effectiveness and fair processes within government.

This is why Conservatives have put forward a motion today that calls on the government to show the numbers, to account for the cost. It also calls for the money to be paid back. In cases where money was spent for no work, money should be paid back to the taxpayers. Canadians are struggling as a result of decisions made by the government. Canadians deserve to know the cost. They deserve to see the records of deleted emails. They deserve to see the information, and they deserve to have their money back.

Common-sense Conservatives will restore accountability and responsibility in government. When Conservatives are in office, we will no longer have ministers presiding over corruption, crime and chaos while claiming that they had nothing to do with it. We will have a government that axes the tax, builds the homes, fixes the budget, stops the crime, ends the corruption and treats taxpayers' dollars with respect.

• (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, he almost forgot his lines.

It is interesting. He said, “well-connected insider”, referring to GC Strategies. Those well-connected insiders are the very same insiders that the leader of the Conservative Party gave literally mil-

Business of Supply

lions of dollars to while he was a parliamentary secretary in the Harper government.

Would he not apply the very same principles that he just finished espousing to his own leader today? Did that leader make a mistake back then?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is sad to see the desperation of the parliamentary secretary across the way.

Here are the facts: GC Strategies was incorporated immediately after the Prime Minister took office. The Prime Minister came into office eight years ago, promising sunny ways. Do members remember that? It sure was sunny for GC Strategies.

GC Strategies was incorporated as soon as the Prime Minister took office, and it did a quarter of a billion dollars' worth of business with the Liberal government. Even in the eyes of the Liberal government, it is actually real money we are talking about. A quarter of a billion dollars went to this two-person company. All it did was receive contracts, go on LinkedIn to find someone else to do the job, and—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The rules are very specific. A member cannot intentionally mislead the House. The member is intentionally misleading the House, because it is the same company. They are the same two people.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start a debate on that.

This gives me the opportunity to say that, it being 5:27 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[Translation]

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1730)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 5:42 p.m. so we can begin private member's hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-320, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (disclosure of information to victims), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak to Bill C-320, which amends the Criminal Code with respect to disclosure of information to victims. The Bloc Qu b cois supports this bill.

As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women since 2020, I have contributed to numerous studies aimed at addressing violence against women. The figures are very alarming. Many cities in Quebec and Canada have gone so far as to describe the situation as an epidemic. We need to come up with concrete solutions for victims, to prevent the violence from creating more victims. In a recent article, I promised to make this a priority in my status of women file.

Today, I will explain the Bloc's position in greater detail. Then, I will elaborate a bit on the benefits of this bill. In closing, I will reiterate the importance of making this a non-partisan issue.

First, the Bloc Qu b cois's position is consistent with its commitment to support initiatives that keep women safe and that address violence against women. We believe that victims have everything to gain from getting as much information as possible about their assailant and the situation surrounding the assailant's potential release. This position is in keeping with the Bloc Qu b cois's support for Bill C-233. As a small reminder, that bill amended the Criminal Code to require a justice, before making a release order in respect of an accused who is charged with an offence against their intimate partner, to consider whether it is desirable, in the interests of the safety and security of any person, to include as a condition of the order that the accused wear an electronic monitoring device. The Bloc Qu b cois will always stand up to protect victims of crime and strengthen the relationship of trust between the public and our institutions.

Secondly, the bill before us now seeks to amend the Criminal Code to enable victims of a criminal offence to get an explanation about how certain decisions were made about their assailant. This includes the eligibility dates and review dates applicable to the offender in respect of temporary absences, work release, parole or statutory release. Adding a mechanism that would give victims access to additional information about their assailant's situation and decisions being made about that person is certain to strengthen the justice system.

Over the past few years, Quebec has positioned itself as a world leader in enhancing victim protection and strengthening victims' trust in the justice system. For example, the Government of Quebec has launched a pilot project in a number of courthouses to create courts specializing in sexual assault cases in certain courthouses;

one of them is near me, in Granby. There is also the electronic monitoring device pilot project, which was successful and has been deployed across the province. These advancements meet the objective of recognizing how vulnerable victims of an offence are and putting all the tools at their disposal so they can be safe. This way, the justice system can evolve and adapt to better serve the needs of victims of crime. In an effort to be consistent, the Bloc Qu b cois will support Bill C-320.

If they pass, these legislative changes will represent an added value for the victims, including female victims of domestic or sexual violence, for example. The justice system has to be more effective in general and more transparent, not least to facilitate the legal process and ease the long-term effects on victims or their family, especially when a decision is made about releasing the assailant. It also strengthens public trust in the justice system so that no other victim of a crime will hesitate to report it to the police.

Statistics show that there has been a spike in femicide and domestic violence. Between 2009 and 2019, there was an increase of 7.5%. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to help reverse this troubling trend. The year 2024 is not off to a good start, since the first femicide in Quebec took place at the beginning of January in Granby, in my riding. Once again, my thoughts and sympathies go out to the victim's loved ones.

The reality on the ground highlights the gaps, including the status quo in the justice system: Many victims continue to fear their assailant, even while that person is in custody. We can only applaud an initiative that seeks to improve the victim's experience of the justice system throughout the process, starting from the moment she decides to file a complaint. We need to rebuild their trust. Actually, "Reb tir la confiance", or rebuilding trust, is the title of an important non-partisan report that was produced by elected officials in Quebec City on the issue of violence against women, highlighting victims' lack of trust in the system.

• (1735)

Thirdly, I would like to emphasize this non-partisan aspect that allows us to move this file forward. I know that the Conservative members will support this bill. We need to rebuild victims' trust in the justice system, which these same victims describe sometimes as lax. This bill seeks to better equip victims and their families so that they can obtain accurate and concurrent information on the court's decisions on their attacker. Victims and their families say that they are sometimes surprised to learn that the attacker is entitled to early release, long before the end of the 25-year sentence, for example. This needs to be taken into account. The Liberal caucus will also be in favour of this bill because it will improve the level of transparency in the judicial process. The NDP caucus, too, will be in favour of this bill because it will improve the level of transparency in the judicial process.

We all agree on the need to find solutions to help victims regain this all-important trust and further encourage them to come forward.

I would like to briefly come back to a few other measures that were recently brought in that seek to meaningfully work on this issue of violence. We know that adding meaningful proposals and establishing a real continuum of services will help victims. No magic wand is going to fix all of this in one shot.

I want to come back to the matter of the special court for victims of sexual assault. This is a recommendation from the report entitled “Rebâtir la confiance”, that is currently being analyzed. The purpose of such a court would be to give victims a safe space where they can be heard by the justice system, a space where the workers at every level, including judges, are sensitive to the needs of victims. The first such court was set up in Valleyfield on March 5, 2022. It was a world first. Yes, Quebec became the first place in the world to set up a court specialized in domestic violence.

With regard to electronic monitoring devices, Quebec has once again been a leader in better protecting victims. Quebec became the first province in Canada to launch a two-pronged monitoring system for domestic violence suspects. However, threats still exist. From what I heard in committee, we need to be careful that these devices do not create a false sense of security and ensure that they are worn properly. We also need to consider the fact that connectivity may be a problem in some places, especially remote areas, which means that the devices may not work properly there. We need to address that.

I had argued from the outset that the government should follow suit and recognize Quebec's leadership on this issue. On May 20, 2022, Quebec was the first jurisdiction in the country to do this. It was ridiculous that only criminals sentenced to two years less a day should have to wear an electronic bracelet. The federal government should follow suit so that criminals with the toughest sentences could also find themselves subject to this measure under the Criminal Code.

We have seen study after study in committee, but concrete action is slow in coming. There was the committee study on intimate partner violence, which also demonstrated the need to broaden our perception of violence and include the notion of coercive control. Recently, there was the clause-by-clause study of Bill S-205, which specifically aimed to broaden the scope of electronic bracelet use. There is also this question of trust in the system that was raised during the study on abuse in the world of sport. Victims questioned the complaints system and called for an independent public inquiry to restore their trust and encourage reporting. In fact, that was the top recommendation in the report by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The government must take action now.

In closing, I would say that it is important to send a strong message to the victims and to take additional measures. We have to set partisanship aside and ensure that we actually mean it when we call ourselves feminists, that we walk the talk. I have had enough of fake feminism. On the other side, they cannot claim to be feminists by boasting about getting tough on crime if they also infringe on women's right to control their own bodies.

Private Members' Business

We have to remain vigilant and not fall prey to demagoguery, disinformation, and dare I say even the erosion of law and order. That would be the logical conclusion.

It is going to take a lot more than common sense to find solutions. Let us all—elected members, justice officials and community stakeholders at every level—work toward a common objective: to save women's lives so that there is not one more victim.

• (1740)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the people of North Island—Powell River.

Before I start my speech on this particular bill, I want to take an opportunity to send my love and condolences to the “real” North Island, as they like to call it. It is an area of a lot of small communities and small indigenous communities that, unfortunately, have seen several deaths of young people in the last few months. I know they are reeling from this, and a lot of constituents have reached out to express their fear, their concern and their need for support for youth. I want to thank them for doing that, and I thank all the organizations in the region that are opening up their hearts and workplaces to accommodate and work with youth and their loved ones.

It is a very hard time. I just want to acknowledge that, for all of us in this place, we know that youth are the most important gift that we receive as humanity. When we lose them, in whatever way, it cuts us deeply. I just want to send my love and prayers to them and continue to work with them towards solutions so we can protect our youth much more effectively.

However, we are here today to talk about Bill C-320, which is a private member's bill from the member for Oshawa. The bill talks about having a requirement to provide victims with an explanation as to why a specific parole date had been chosen, so victims can better understand the parole system. I think it would be a minor change, but it could have a significant impact on people. We know that too many people who are victimized often feel revictimized when they hear information that they are surprised to receive. Therefore, as we move forward collectively in this place, making our systems as clear as possible just helps to build that connection and provide some orientation when people are going through very hard and difficult times.

Private Members' Business

When we look at the justice system, we see high rates of incarceration of indigenous and racialized people, those living in poverty and, of course, those with mental health and addictions issues, which is really concerning. I do not know if “justice” really belongs in the title. This reminds me of several indigenous communities and elders I have spent time with. Every story is a little bit different, but the main theme is this: When we have a person in our society who is behaving in a way that is hard, stressful or unpleasant for the society, we do not blame that person. Instead, we step back and look at the whole society to see what is happening within the collective that is creating this response in the person.

I think that is a really hard thing to do; it shows how strong so many indigenous communities are, because they have that capacity. When the system is broken, it breaks people; it breaks communities, and we see this way too often. It is extremely stressful for those who are experiencing it, but when we objectify it, push it away and say, “those people are this way”, we dehumanize them. I hope that the idea here is to actually look at ways to collect people together to better inform them of the process, to make it collectively safer for everyone and to recognize that our system is broken. As we move through these small changes, we have to start looking at what big changes need to happen to really fix some of these huge, gaping holes.

We have heard a lot of talk, especially from the Conservatives, about Bill C-5. I understand that their methodology is about being tough on crime, but I am more interested in what actually works. I really believe that we should be listening to the people who spend their lives in these fields and explore these realities, because we need to make sure that our communities are safer. One thing that concerns me is that we often forget to invest in the preventative measures. Instead of dragging people out of the river, prevention means that we go upstream to find out why they are falling in the river. However, we do not see enough of that.

• (1745)

There were some recommendations in the report from the justice committee on improving support for victims of crime. We really need to start looking at this. This is one step toward it, but we need to do some work and make sure we are working with all the provinces and territories to provide support for victims across Canada. We need to look at it from a national perspective as well. I do not want to impose on provinces, but maybe we need to have some standards we need to meet. What is really unfortunate is when one rule applies here but does not apply somewhere else in our country, which can often create divisions. Also, it can be very confusing if we ever have anything that is cross-jurisdiction.

We also have to think of clarity of message so that when people are victimized, the more we are collectively doing similar processes, the more effective things will be. With more repetition, people will start to know what to expect.

In the report, there was a very important recommendation, “That sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights be amended to clarify that the information to which victims of crime are entitled should be provided automatically rather than on request”. The recommendation does go on from there, but this is an important action we need to start taking. Again, when a person is

victimized, it can be very overwhelming. We know that when working with people who have trauma, one needs to repeat things and make sure they understand. Asking them to request is often asking too much from people who have already been victimized.

Another recommendation I want to touch on is recommendation 8: “That the Department of Justice promote and expand restorative justice opportunities, and that adequate funding be provided to restorative justice programs.” In my riding, for example, the Co-mox Valley Community Justice Centre does some very innovative work. It has multiple people trained. It works very closely with indigenous communities to make sure the process is inclusive. It does some very hard work. Restorative justice is not supported enough, so I would love to see more federal funding.

When people who victimize have to accept accountability, have to be accountable to their community and have to really sit and hear the impact on the person they victimized, it changes the dynamics. It gives the victim a lot more power to speak out, to share and to have impact. It really starts to create community. This is an important recommendation.

I will be supporting the bill the member put forward. It is a small step that is somewhat helpful, but we have a lot of work to do. The system is breaking people, and there are too many broken people in this country. We should all do better by them.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Haldimand—Norfolk today. We have all heard the old proverb that knowledge is power, and it is for this reason that I rise to speak in support of Bill C-320, the bill my colleague from Oshawa has championed in the House.

We have heard the painful story that has inspired this bill. It is about a daughter who was blindsided by the early parole given to her father's killer. Because the killer was given a life sentence of 25 years without parole, early parole was not something that was anticipated by the family. It is the tireless advocacy of Lisa Freeman that has led to this bill coming before the House.

The goal of the bill is to simply lay out what needs to be done to include the families of victims in the parole process. Victims of crime would be given timely and accurate information, according to this bill, about parole eligibility. Victims would be included in the information about how those decisions are made and notified prior to the violent offender being released from the system. Bill C-320 would also provide clarity on a victim's ability to participate in the parole hearing.

There is an embarrassing trend in Canada in which the rights of murderers and violent offenders seem to overshadow the rights of victims of violent crimes. In May 2023, one of the most notorious killers, Paul Bernardo, was transferred from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security facility. His victim's family was not notified of this transfer until after it had occurred. This pattern continues today.

Just last week, news broke that a serial killer, Robert Pickton, who was convicted of six counts of second-degree murder and accused of 20 very similar offences, was eligible to apply for day parole. This parole application came just 17 years into his 25-year sentence. It was one of the victim's close relatives who spoke up because the families of the victims were not informed of the parole eligibility.

There is an expression in law that justice must not only be done, but also must be seen to be done. In law, we are careful about ensuring that the sentence fits the crime. We are concerned that the accused should get a fair trial in every situation. All of these values are very important to the criminal justice system and to due process. It is important in upholding the integrity of our judicial system, but what is also important is how we treat victims.

The justice system owes a minimal level of decency and dignity to inform victims' families of these kinds of decisions and how these decisions are approved. Without doing so, the justice system is exacerbating and adding to the trauma of the families of victims when they are blindsided by early parole hearings or transfers to low-security correctional facilities.

Many Canadians assume that, when a sentence is given of 25 years, that is what the offender will serve. Victims and their families cannot continue to be retraumatized in this manner by being kept in the dark about the rationale of decisions in the parole system. Bill C-320 would be vital in ensuring that victims are able to feel free, safe and protected. I come back to the saying that knowledge is power.

● (1750)

Take the example of the personal case of Ms. Freeman, who has inspired this legislation. Ms. Freeman's father, Roland Slingerland, a Royal Canadian Navy veteran, was murdered in cold blood while he was working in a downtown Oshawa rooming house. If the victim's family had been informed before the transfer occurred that his murderer was being moved to a facility just 10 kilometres from the victim's daughter's home, she would have been better prepared emotionally, psychologically and mentally for that. Victims' families do not deserve to be revictimized by the parole system, nor should the system provide false hope and a false sense of security that the person who harmed or murdered their loved ones is behind bars.

The average person, when they hear of a sentence, does not think in terms of parole. They think in terms of that person's serving the entire sentence. Imagine that a family member could just be walking down the street and accidentally encounter, for example, their father's killer. Imagine how traumatizing this would be to the victim's family. Would it not make more sense to inform the family, or perhaps allow them to participate in the parole hearings and provide a victim impact statement?

Private Members' Business

My background is in law. I know how the process by which dates for parole eligibility are determined and how transfers to lower-security facilities are determined. It is not an arbitrary process. Someone does not just wake up and arbitrarily set a date for parole eligibility. There is a process, and the bill before us would include victims in that process by giving them access to information. This would increase the transparency and the trust in the system.

This simple bill would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to give some level of security, respect and dignity to the families of victims. Bill C-320 is a common-sense bill. The legislation would increase transparency and accountability for the government and the justice system by making sure that victims of crime are treated with respect and dignity, and are not arbitrarily left out of the parole hearing process. It would give a stronger voice to victims of crime, as advocates have said. It is quite simple: Victims should not be constantly revictimized by a system that prioritizes offenders' rights over victims' rights, yet this continues to happen over and over again.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to represent the voices of our constituents and to put forward legislation that upholds the rights of all Canadians, that strengthens our laws and that fixes the injustices in our judicial system. This is exactly what my colleague, the member for Oshawa has done by bringing forward this legislation. I want to thank and commend him for bringing it to the floor of the House and for taking it to third reading. I also want to thank Lisa Freeman for her courage, despite the loss of her father.

Transparency and accountability must be at the heart of our democracy. Let us work together in unity to send the bill to the Senate and see that it is passed into law. Victims of violent crime deserve better from their justice system, and the bill is a critical step in the right direction.

● (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-320. The legislation has gone through a very productive process in which it has generated fairly wide support in the House of Commons. It is quite encouraging.

What we have witnessed over the years is a great deal of support for victims of crime. This is something that has been amplified through a number of pieces of legislation that the government has introduced and through legislation that has been introduced by private members. There is nothing wrong with recognizing when a private member brings forward legislation that would have a positive impact and it receiving the support it should.

Private Members' Business

In this situation, Bill C-320 is a bill that, from what I understand, all sides of the House are getting behind. There is an expectation that it will pass, and ultimately go to the Senate and hopefully pass through the Senate in a timely fashion. It is always encouraging when we see legislation, through the draw system and priorities, that members of Parliament have brought forward as individuals that gets to the point that, in all likelihood, it will achieve passage through the Senate of Canada and ultimately receive royal assent.

When we read the legislation in the form it is today, it is very easy to understand and appreciate why it has garnered the support it has. We all recognize the commitment to supporting victims of crimes and their families, and also their communities, because they too are often the victims of violent crimes, and how we can provide that support. This legislation is one step in ensuring that there is a higher sense of accountability for information.

I believe, as I know my colleagues do, that we need to look at ways that individuals who have caused harm to others are held accountable for their actions. On issues such as release, parole hearings or even conditional releases, there needs to be a sense of recognition, in a very strong and tangible way, that the victims and the family members of those victims are aware when someone has been released or granted parole. As well, details need to be provided on the rationale of the system in allowing that individual to be released.

The issue of protecting our victims or standing up for victims was amplified in one of the budgets we provided, through the victims fund, which was close to \$30 million, that was made available to provincial and territorial governments, and non-governmental organizations, to increase awareness and knowledge of victim issues, as well as the legislation and services that are available. That was a couple years back.

Not only have we taken specific actions in certain areas of legislative changes, but we have also put the budgetary resources to support victims. I find it interesting, when we can build that support base, how relatively quickly we can come up with the consent of the House.

• (1800)

The other day I was talking about the former leader of the Conservative Party and her private member's bill regarding the education of judges, if I can put it as simply as that, on the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation. As a result of the wide level of support for the issue, not only was the House able to pass it but, from what I understand, provincial jurisdictions have also taken it into consideration, and I would like to think have actually acted on it.

There are things that take place here in Ottawa that can have a positive impact on the entire system. Here, of course, we are talking about criminal law, so it is somewhat different, but the principles are the same in the sense that the legislation received widespread support and ultimately is going to pass through the House.

Where I find I get a little offside at times with the Conservative Party is when its members try to give the false impression that they want to be tough on crime, such as when they talk about one of their four priorities and give the very simple statement, "We are going to stop crime." What I refer to as bumper sticker slogans are of-

ten accompanied by misinformation to try to give the impression that, for example, the government is weak on the issue of crime.

The speaker before me made reference to a case where an inmate had been transferred. The first thing that came to my mind was when Ralph Goodale, when he was minister of public safety, brought to the attention of the House the issue of Tori Stafford's brutal murder that took place in 2009. When the sentencing came down, the perpetrator ultimately was put into a maximum-security facility and was then transferred in 2014 to a medium-security facility. That happened under a Conservative regime.

However, when something of that nature happens on this side, the Conservatives will say that the Liberals are soft on crime. There seems to be a double standard used by the Conservatives, one standard they will use when they are in opposition, to try to give the false impression of being tough on crime and the government of the day being soft on crime, and then another standard when they are in government. It would be interesting to know how many private members' bills dealing with the issue of crime have been debated, ones originated from the Conservative caucus. A couple of them have passed. How does this compare to the type of government legislation they brought in when they were in the position to do so?

I like to believe that supporting law enforcement agencies is really important in dealing with crime. When the Conservatives say they are going to stop crime, I like to remind my constituents that it was the Conservatives who actually cut \$430 million from RCMP funding. That does not help stop crime; however, it feeds into the message, while they are in opposition, that the Conservatives are going to be tough on crime.

• (1805)

I would suggest that we need to see more consistency coming from the member opposite. In terms of Bill C-320, today, we are witnessing how the member has been able to build up a consensus that would benefit the victims of crime. To that end, I will be supporting this particular piece of legislation.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-320, which was introduced by the member for Oshawa.

This bill is very much in line with other private members' bills that have been introduced by various members from various parties. These bills demonstrate that there is complete unanimity on this issue, unlike in many other areas. All parties agree when it comes to the issue of protecting victims and integrating them better into the justice system.

Private Members' Business

For example, I can talk about two other bills that were debated very recently in the House, including Bill C-332, which was introduced by the NDP member for Victoria and seeks to criminalize coercive control. That bill focuses more on partners or spouses in a family context. I would like to read the bill summary:

This enactment amends the Criminal Code to create an offence of engaging in controlling or coercive conduct that has a significant impact on the person towards whom the conduct is directed, including a fear of violence, a decline in their physical or mental health or a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities.

This bill seeks to create a new offence for conduct that often occurs in a domestic context.

I was also pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-205, which was introduced by now former senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu and has to do with intimate partners. Once again, by way of explanation, I want to read the bill summary as it appears in the bill. It states and I quote:

This enactment amends the Criminal Code in respect of interim release and other orders related to intimate partner violence offences. The enactment also provides for recognizance orders to be made when there is a reasonable fear of domestic violence.

This bill, which I spoke to in the fall, is rather large in scope when it comes to measures to protect victims of domestic violence.

The two bills I just talked about deal with keeping women safe and protecting female victims. We know that the number of femicides increased by roughly 7.5% between 2009 and 2019. My colleague from Shefford also mentioned this. There is a great deal of work to be done to protect women. That is also the purpose of Senator Boisvenu's bill. It talks about the use of electronic bracelets, but also about the obligation to give the victim a copy of the order regarding the accused and to ensure that the victim has been consulted about her safety and security needs when a bail decision is being made.

There was already a strong interest in ensuring that victims of domestic violence offences or sexual offences are given more information about, and also have a say in, an accused's release, should a peace bond be issued. The idea is to ensure that the victim is aware of the situation and that she can even be involved in the release process, in a way, by helping monitor the actions of an accused who is subject to certain conditions, such as maintaining distance. Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies do not always have enough eyes to ensure that release conditions are met. Perhaps this is one way to ensure better monitoring and enforcement of orders.

Bill C-320 has some minor nuances. In this case, we are talking about victims in general. It is not just about victims of sexual offences or victims of domestic violence, but would include the families of murder victims, for example. The definition of victim as set out in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act includes the direct victim, but it also stipulates that someone else can act on the victim's behalf. This could include the victim's spouse or the person who was their spouse at the time of the victim's death, someone who was cohabiting with the victim, a relative or a dependant. This means that the bill can apply to a broader definition of victim. What this bill does is make it mandatory to give the victim more information on certain aspects.

• (1815)

We are not calling into question the very concept of parole, for example. That is something that the Bloc Québécois supports, because we believe in rehabilitation. The parole system may not be perfect, but we must still support it in the sense that, in some cases, rehabilitation takes precedence over a very strict desire to simply keep people incarcerated when it is not necessary or appropriate and when there is a real possibility of social reintegration.

Under the bill, the victim must be informed of the eligibility dates and review dates applicable to the offender in respect of temporary absences or parole, and they must be given an explanation of how those dates were determined. The victim must also be informed when the offender is released on escorted or unescorted temporary absence, on parole and on placement, meaning when the offender is sent to a halfway house. The victim must be informed of the date on which the offender will be released and how that date was determined. In short, explanations are given regarding the parole system, temporary absences and orders to place the offender in a halfway house.

Without completely reforming the issue of parole, this bill ensures that the person does not learn through the media that an individual convicted of a crime committed against her or a member of her family was released without her full knowledge of the process, the mechanics of that decision. This will ensure greater confidence. In fact, I dare to hope that the bill will help give victims more confidence in the federal prison system and further involve victims in the process. If this transparency can make victims more confident, that can have an untold impact on certain aspects of the judicial process.

I mentioned this during the study of Bill S-205. One of the common problems encountered in court when the time comes to lay criminal charges against someone, and particularly in the context of domestic violence, is that the victim is often not a party to the case, but simply a witness. This witness is important because, often, they are the only witness the Crown can use to put someone in jail and proceed with a hearing. If the victim does not have sufficient confidence in the justice system, she may decide not to testify, for fear of retribution. It is often for these reasons that domestic violence hearings go nowhere, for lack of a victim.

Private Members' Business

This is an opportunity to improve overall knowledge of the justice system, from one end of the legal process to the other, as was done with the other two bills, and this one. We can help people understand the system better, have more trust in it and participate more in the process to ensure that those who have committed wrongdoing end up serving the sentence handed down for their actions.

However, we also need to ensure that better psychological supports are available. As soon as the institution is required to properly inform victims about the parole process, for example, this can re-traumatize many victims. We must therefore ensure that there are sufficient resources and supports in place for these victims if we want to get this right. We will have to make sure that there is a useful purpose, but also that we think more about the victims in the sense that this bill puts victims at the centre of the process. We must not do just one part of the job. We have to make sure that the work is done properly and that victims are fully supported. Ultimately, we have to be able to say that the victim has been put at the centre of our concerns and is part of the judicial process. She is not just an outside witness.

This bill has good intentions, and that is why I am convinced that the parties decided to unanimously support it at second reading and in committee, and that they will support it now at third reading.

• (1820)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Oshawa has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to say that I feel quite humbled and quite happy to be standing here this evening.

We have heard the speeches in the House and the comments from members in regard to this bill. We have actually had an opportunity, instead of talking about some of these crimes, to talk about victims and their families. I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my colleagues in the House. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the victims and their families for their strength and for their advocacy. In particular, we have heard the name of Lisa Freeman a few times. She is a constituent of mine, who, with incredible tenacity and stubbornness, has helped make getting this bill through the House a reality.

As my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk said, “Knowledge is power.” This legislation would make a very simple amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act with respect to the disclosure of information to victims. It would provide and give greater respect and transparency to families and victims.

This is a change, and I will agree that it is a small change, but we are in a situation in which we have heard examples of where criminals are now getting more support from the system than the victims. This needs to be reversed.

Criminals' rights should never trump victims' rights, but it seems to happen every single time. It is our job to protect victims' rights. It should never be a family's job. These families, when their loved ones are murdered, get a life sentence. There is the mental trauma and cost, and it never goes away. The least we can do is be more

transparent about how the criminals who changed their lives forever are being managed.

As we have heard in some of the speeches, we are not going to fix all these serious matters with this one bill, but I think we can all agree that the system needs to be recalibrated. The rights of victims have to be made equal to, or rather they should always be made better than the rights of their offenders.

Here we have it, colleagues. A killer could be released into a community where his victims live, at the whim of his case management team, with no need to explain to the victims how the decision was made or when the release will take place, until after the fact. I know all members will agree that this is unconscionable. It should not be a fight that victims have to take on year after year, just to keep the most callous of murderers where they belong.

Under the guise of rehabilitation, victims of crime often must stand back and watch while violent offenders exercise their rights, which, as most victims of crime find, are nothing more than a mockery of the justice system and basic common sense.

Throughout this debate, we have been able to give victims' families a voice. I just want to add a more recent example, because it is very important that we pass this bill right away, as soon as we can. We heard, just last week, that Robert Pickton is now eligible to seek day parole, a murderer charged with killing 26 women and convicted of the deaths of six. I want to read some of the coverage from the families.

A cousin of one of Robert Pickton's victims stated, “The fact that he can actually apply is horrific.” This is what Ms. Williams said Wednesday, ahead of the candlelight vigil taking place by Pickton's old farm. She went on, “That threw me right off. I didn't know and the other families that I'm close to didn't know.”

It is extremely unlikely that Pickton would ever be released, but Ms. Williams, a fierce advocate for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, said that the mere fact that he can apply is disgusting. She also stated, “Our justice system is horrific. It's racist and puts Indigenous women's lives in danger...It makes me sick to my stomach.”

She said that no one involved in the justice system informed victims' families that Pickton's day parole eligibility date was approaching, and she found out only after talking with a lawyer she knows.

This has to stop. I want to thank colleagues in the House for their unanimous support, because it is an opportunity for us to do something that is right, and we can do it now.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. This is in contrast to the Liberal record. The Liberals have axed the homes, built the crime, hiked the tax and stopped the budgeting.

We are here to discuss the arrive scam scandal and, in particular, the procurement ombudsman's excellent report. Today, the procurement ombudsman was before the public accounts committee, and he confirmed that he is not at all surprised that the RCMP is now investigating the corruption at the heart of the government.

In the arrive scam scandal, we see multiple layers of costly criminal corruption in the government's procurement system. The procurement ombudsman found that the government built a system for procurement designed to encourage companies to charge the government more. This is really incredible. If they charged too little, their bids or points might be removed, so the incentive was built right into the system for companies to charge more.

The procurement ombudsman found a chronic problem of so-called bait and switch. This is where the bidding company says it is going to have one person do the work, then it switches and has someone else do the work, someone who is potentially substantially less qualified. This builds on what we already know: GC Strategies, the company that got the ArriveCAN contract, was changing and falsifying resumé's they submitted to the government, and the government rigged the process.

Members of the government sat down with the GC Strategies team to set the terms of the contract, such that GC Strategies would get the deal. This is a two-person company that subcontracts all the actual work, and yet the government sat down with this company and rigged the process so it would get the contracts. It built a system that would favour insiders to ensure GC Strategies got the deal.

Adjournment Proceedings

On top of that, it designed a process that would encourage GC Strategies and others to charge the government more, not less.

It is no wonder that spending is out of control and that Canadians are struggling under the pressure of higher taxes and the impact of higher deficits. When the government designs contracting-out processes, it designs systems to try to charge more. The levels of cost, crime and corruption we see in this arrive scam scandal are really incredible.

The RCMP is investigating. I asked the Prime Minister today whether the government will co-operate with the RCMP investigation. There was no answer. We had the procurement ombudsman's investigation report and the Auditor General's report, which reveal what happened. However, we now need to identify who the responsible individuals are and why they did it. Why was the process rigged in order to give this deal to this two-person company working out of a basement? Why was it rigged to GC Strategies' advantage? Why did the government create a system designed to charge taxpayers more, not less?

These are the key questions that need to be answered by the government, but I will distill it into one simple point. The RCMP is now investigating criminal behaviour as part of the arrive scam scandal. The parliamentary secretary was formerly with the Ontario government and has a great deal of experience dealing with issues of corruption. Could he tell the House, yes or no, whether the government will co-operate with the RCMP's investigation?

• (1830)

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite raises an important issue about procurement activity, which was actually prevalent during the Conservative time and similar to what we are unravelling today with the same characters at play.

Our government takes the responsibility as stewards of public funds very seriously, and we are committed to ensuring that the government's spends stand to the highest level of scrutiny. Contracting for goods and services is a routine part of the business of government, it is instrumental in enabling us to deliver the services and programs that Canadians need and expect, and we have an important need to put guardrails in place to maintain the integrity of that process.

When it comes to deciding whether to contract out certain projects, many factors are taken into consideration. It starts with the proposition that contractors are there to support the good work of our public servants where it is determined that there is a need for professional services. Public Services and Procurement Canada, as the federal government's central purchasing agent, will work with departments to procure those services in an open, fair and transparent fashion.

Adjournment Proceedings

The department procures on behalf of other departments and agencies when requirements are beyond their own spending authority and advises on the steps needed to then ensure that the money is well spent. However, what we have unravelled, and what our government has been reviewing, is what occurred or what did not occur with respect to those guardrails. These procurements are carried out by public servants in accordance with a number of regulations, trade agreements, policies, procedures and guidelines. The Government of Canada has a governing framework in place when it comes to procurement that public servants are expected to follow.

The ArriveCAN app was put in place urgently to track and trace travellers as they crossed the border to limit the spread of COVID-19 within Canada. Our government acted with extreme urgency on a number of fronts during those early days of the pandemic to keep Canadians safe, and the ArriveCAN app was a crucial tool at the time.

We are proud that we could be there for Canadians during the pandemic, notwithstanding the fact that the opposition was opposed to many of the services and supports that were given to Canadians and businesses, including the opportunity to keep border crossings open. However, as has been noted repeatedly during today's debate, we know that there are serious and valid questions surrounding the management and integrity of the procurement processes for professional services associated with ArriveCAN, and we owe it to Canadians to take immediate action to improve our processes. The reports by the Auditor General and the procurement ombudsman underscore the need for these improvements.

Public servants and PSPC officials have already taken steps to implement the ombudsman's recommendations to strengthen the integrity of the procurement process. This includes work to improve evaluation requirements, increase transparency for suppliers around their pricing and use of subcontractors, improve contract documentation, improve clarification of work requirements and activities. It also includes work to evaluate resources just before the start of work to make sure that their services are actually delivered by the proposed resources to avoid some of that switching of services by those who are appointed.

We will ensure that the lessons learned from the ombudsman and the Auditor General reports are turned into concrete action and make certain that the deficiencies uncovered do not occur again. We are committed to a fair and transparent procurement process for the best value for all Canadians.

• (1835)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is truly incredible listening to that member talk.

This government has been in power for eight years. It has broken the procurement system in this country, and the Liberals speak about problems that happened as if they have no responsibility for what happens under their watch. This government is supposed to be in charge and it refuses to take responsibility for the costs, the corruption and the criminality that we now see as part of the ArriveCAN system.

The Liberals want us to believe that, well, it was an emergency and the ArriveCAN app was necessary. This app went through 177

different versions, it sent over 10,000 people into quarantine by accident and the versions were not properly tested. They hired two people with no IT experience. There are no excuses, and this government should take responsibility.

Again, will the government co-operate with the RCMP investigation into criminality, yes or no?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I am thankful again for the opportunity to refute some of the member's claims. I get it. Certainly, the response that was provided for him the first go-around, and the reason we are here, is that it does not appreciate the fact he is looking for further videos and a further opportunity to provide whatever exaggerations he sees fit to support his position.

We, on this side of the House, are very serious about the opportunities to manage the responsibility of government funds. We are committed to the best value for Canadians by procuring those goods and services. To ensure that it is competitive, fair and accessible, the Government of Canada has a governing framework in place, and we have accepted many of the recommendations from the ombudsman and the Auditor General.

Members should recall that it was this government that actually approved that the RCMP do an investigation. It was this government that took the responsibility initially to ensure that those who are being affected are being protected. We are taking every step to strengthen our procurement process. We are committed to incorporating those lessons learned. Notwithstanding the member opposite, the lessons learned require serious responsibility, which Conservatives do not have.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as a humanitarian catastrophe continues to unfold in Gaza, I rise tonight to follow up on the many times I have called for the government to advocate for a ceasefire, beginning on October 8 and repeating numerous times in the House in the weeks after.

After months of pressure from Arab, Muslim and Palestinian Canadians across the country, the government's position on a ceasefire changed at the UN just before the holidays. Then, various ministers and the Prime Minister began to finally say the word "ceasefire" in recent months. This pressure included protests, sit-ins, meetings with MPs, Muslim donors revoking their financial support and the National Council of Canadian Muslims turning down a scheduled in-person meeting with the Prime Minister last month. While it never should have taken months to simply call for a ceasefire, the government's changed position made it clear that people power has an impact.

In the meantime, it is worsening. Since October 7, almost 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, including at least 10,000 children. What makes no sense at all is how the government claims to support a ceasefire, but is not taking positions that would align with that call. The government must, at the very least, align its actions with its call for a ceasefire. With the limited time I have tonight, I would like to give three examples.

First, it must refund the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA for short. Last week, the Minister of International Development was at the Rafah gates calling for a ceasefire with a supposed concern about aid not getting into Gaza, yet he is the minister responsible for defunding UNRWA. Two million people in Gaza rely on UNRWA for life-saving humanitarian aid, including food, water and medicine. This was cut after 12 employees out of 13,000 were alleged to be associated with Hamas. All 12 of them have been fired, and the CBC has reported that these claims were made by Israel without any supporting evidence. If the government is serious about a ceasefire, UNRWA must be re-funded.

Second, if it is serious about a ceasefire, it must also call for Israel to follow the International Court of Justice ruling calling for six steps to be taken to prevent genocide. Now that it has been over a month since the ruling, Amnesty International has made it clear that Israel has failed to take even the bare minimum steps to comply with the ruling. Canada is a signatory to the genocide convention, so we are bound by this ICJ decision. In other jurisdictions around the world, Ukraine for example, Canada is vocal in calling for a rules-based order to be followed. Why is it not doing so when it comes to what may be a genocide in Gaza?

Finally, if it is serious about a ceasefire, the government must end the permitting of military equipment destined for Israel. Global Affairs has revealed that the government has authorized at least \$28.5 million of new permits for military exports to Israel since October 7. A coalition of legal advocates has warned that it is ready to bring a legal challenge against the federal government if it has failed to halt military sales to Israel. A coalition of civil society organizations, including Human Rights Watch, KAIROS and the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, have called for the same.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this: If the government claims to finally be in support of a ceasefire, why is it not taking actions that would align with that, such as re-funding UNRWA, calling for Israel to follow the ICJ decision and ending all military exports destined for Israel?

• (1840)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we share an immense grief, and our hearts break for the tragic loss of civilian life. All of those impacted are at the forefront of our mind, including all families and communities affected by the violence. Children, in particular, have been disproportionately affected by the ongoing hostilities.

The horrific attacks by Hamas against Israeli civilians still shock us all. I surely do remember, because October 7 was my 40th birthday. We are unequivocal in our condemnation of Hamas's terrorist

attack against Israel, the appalling loss of life and the heinous acts of violence perpetrated in those attacks.

I want to thank the member for Waterloo, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler and the member for Cambridge for advocating for solutions that respect both the Jewish community and the Palestinian community.

Canada condemns Hamas's unacceptable treatment of hostages and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages.

What has been happening in Gaza is catastrophic. With the humanitarian situation already dire, the impacts of an expanded military operation in Rafah would be devastating for Palestinian civilians as well as for foreign nationals who are seeking refuge. They have nowhere else to go, and as the minister has said, asking them to move again is simply unacceptable. The price of defeating Hamas cannot be the continued suffering of all Palestinian civilians.

The violence must stop. That is why we have been calling for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire. This cannot be one-sided; Hamas must release all hostages and lay down its arms, and humanitarian aid must urgently be increased and sustained. The need for humanitarian assistance in Gaza has never been greater. Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief must be provided to civilians.

Canada will continue to work with its partners toward ensuring the sustained access of humanitarian assistance for civilians, including food, water, medical care, fuel, shelter and access to humanitarian workers. To date, Canada has announced \$100 million in humanitarian assistance to address the urgent needs of vulnerable civilians in this crisis. We are clear that a sustainable ceasefire is necessary to finding a path toward securing lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

We have been calling for a ceasefire for two months, and we expect every party to join us if they have not done so already. Canada remains steadfast in our commitment to a two-state solution. This means the creation of a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state, where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in peace, security and dignity, just like they do in Canada.

• (1845)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, all parliamentarians of the House have been calling for hostages to be released since October 7. It took the government months to even say the word “ceasefire”. Now, when it is finally able to, it is not understanding that it is not time to play politics and that it needs to align its actions with its calls for a ceasefire.

Adjournment Proceedings

I will ask it again: If the government is serious about a ceasefire, when will it get serious about re-funding UNRWA, about calling for Israel to follow the decision of the ICJ, and about not being complicit but ending all military exports destined for Israel?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I do not recall any member of Parliament, on October 8, calling for a ceasefire, so let us get the politics out of this particular issue. Let us call for what is reasonable. Obviously Israel has a right to defend itself, but it has to respect international law. That is what Canada has been calling for since October 7. Obviously we have been calling for a ceasefire since before the holiday season, I will remind the member.

Obviously Canada, with its allies, has to play a role and will continue to play a role. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has continued to play a role in calling for more humanitarian aid to ensure that it gets to the people who are asking for it, obviously the Palestinian community in Gaza that has been needing this humanitarian aid. At the same time, she has been calling for a ceasefire. In a peace for Israel, everybody has to lay down their arms. We have been asking for this for months.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I asked in question period a couple of weeks ago about the catastrophic damage that was suffered by the wine and soft fruit sectors in the southern interior of British Columbia in the middle of January. As I have said before in this place, that region and in particular the south Okanagan makes the best wines in Canada and grows the best cherries, peaches and apricots. These sectors support the B.C. economy to the tune of \$2 billion or more, providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in taxes.

However, after a very mild winter, grapevines and fruit trees were very much in spring mode. The sap was rising. Then, on January 11, a river of Arctic air poured in from northern valleys. A friend of mine has a weather station in his orchard near Penticton and his temperature records showed a drop from 2°C to -23.5°C in just 12 hours. That temperature plunge killed essentially 100% of the buds on grapevines in the Okanagan Valley. It killed the apricot and peach buds and many of the cherry buds as well. That means there will be no harvest of grapes this year and has huge impacts on soft fruits.

Whether this one-season impact of dead buds will recover next year or there will be a longer-term impact of completely dead vines and trees remains to be seen. If the plants have not survived, it would mean an expensive replant program followed by four or five years with no crops at all. For the wine industry, this crisis means, at a minimum, no white wines the next year and no red wines the year after. This is after a similar freeze in December 2022 that cut the grape harvest in half and then wildfires literally shut down the tourism to the southern interior last summer that is an essential part of the wine and soft fruit economy. Therefore, wineries and orchardists were already reeling, and fighting for survival when this even more drastic impact hit their sector.

I just want to pause here to mention the cause of this sudden freeze because in normal situations, extreme Arctic temperatures are kept in the far north by the polar vortex and a strong linear jet

stream that holds the southern boundary of that vortex in place. However, the polar vortex and the jet stream are driven by strong temperature differences between the frigid polar air and the milder temperate air masses. When we have increasingly frequent and increasingly strong global warming, and last year was a record breaker in all regards, that jet stream weakens and meanders in big loops and brings polar air southward and milder air northward. It was this situation that caused the abrupt temperature changes that killed the vine and fruit tree buds.

What can we do to help the wineries, the vineyard owners and the orchardists survive this serious setback? There are a number of policy changes that the B.C. provincial government can make to temporarily make it possible for these sectors to get through for a year or two. The federal government can provide emergency funding through the AgriRecovery framework and the AgriStability program, but whatever that support looks like, we need to see it quickly before the sector is devastated. As well, all the winery, brewery and distillery operators in my riding and across the country are demanding that the excise tax regime be changed so the tax does not automatically increase based on inflation every year. That causes extra pain in years when the business owners are already dealing with rising costs of everything that goes into their fine products.

● (1850)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his question on grape producers in British Columbia impacted by a killing frost for the second year in a row. I was here in the House when he advocated on behalf of them.

Obviously, our hearts go out to producers during this extremely challenging time. I want to reassure the hon. member that the Minister of Agriculture has already been in touch with the B.C. minister of agriculture to find potential solutions and to offer a solution that is acceptable to our B.C. wine growers.

Right across the Okanagan, our hard-working farm families continue to produce top-quality sustainable grapes for award-winning B.C. wines. It pains me to say this, as I am an MP from Ontario, but I would love to taste more B.C. wines right here in Ontario. I think trade is important. I would love for him to taste more Ontario wines when he is out in his region. Obviously, we all care about Canada's grape growers and the wine sector across the country. Their work has also played an important role in driving our economy and creating jobs that lead to billions of dollars in sales and tourism.

B.C. has suffered devastating losses and hardships from flooding, wildfires, heat waves, droughts and, now, frosts. The resiliency of our farmers and our processors across B.C. in the face of these challenges has been remarkable. They continue to keep the grocery store shelves stocked and the economy strong, but the current catastrophic frost situation is only adding more stress and unpredictability to their farm businesses, for producers of both grapes and fruit crops.

Our government is here for B.C. farmers. Producers have access to a full suite of business risk management programs. Business risk management programs are the first line of defence for producers facing disasters such as this one. Our government has contributed about 60% of subsidized premiums for the crop insurance program used by participating producers to mitigate production losses. In addition, we have already supported British Columbia's late participation in AgriStability and the province's request in 2023 for an increase to the interim payment rate from 50% to 75%. We have also increased the compensation rate for AgriStability from 70% to 80%, starting with the 2023 program year, meaning more support in times of need.

We have proven our commitment to the industry over the past few years through our support for farmers impacted by extreme weather, and we are here again, as a steady and reliable partner to our provincial counterpart, ready to support and to help. My message, through the minister, is that we are here to help. We will continue conversations. Obviously, we do not want to see a sector like the grape producers in Okanagan fail because of a variable it cannot control. Climate change is real.

I am happy to hear that the member is supporting climate change policies that will make a direct impact on farmers. I am looking forward to more questions from the member on this particular issue.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, preliminary estimates of the direct economic impact on the wine industry in the Okanagan Valley from last month's freeze are on the order of \$450 million in

one valley. That does not take into account the indirect impact on the tourism sector: motels, hotels, restaurants and tour companies. Small wineries are already being impacted by the imposition of an excise tax for the first time. The federal government did bring in an 18-month support program for the sector to soften the blow of that cost, but that program is due to end at the end of March. A renewed program would be essential to rebuild a sector recovering from this year's crisis.

Last week, I met with the wine sector and the fruit growers to discuss this urgent situation. I will close by simply urging the parliamentary secretary and his minister to listen to the deep concerns and to the suggested solutions from the vineyard owners and orchardists who are such an iconic part of my riding and its economy.

• (1855)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, it is extremely hard to disagree with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. Obviously, he represents a riding that is important to agriculture and to our wine industry. We have been supporting our wine industry through the wine sector support program by providing \$166 million. I know that he is supportive of, potentially, a next program, and I know that he is supportive of limiting the excise tax to the current inflation rate. I want to thank him for his support because he not only joined the Craft beer caucus at the beginning, which I was chairing, but also supported the wine industry.

I look forward to more positive news and to the continuation of the B.C. minister's positive relationship with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to ensure that our wine sector succeeds, not only in B.C. but also everywhere in Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Interparliamentary Delegations

Mr. Sheehan 21331

Committees of the House

Public Accounts

Mr. Williamson 21331

Mr. Nater 21331

Protecting Canada's Natural Wonders Act

Ms. Hutchings (for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change) 21331

Bill S-14. First reading 21331

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time) 21331

Petitions

Pornography

Mrs. Shanahan 21331

Ukraine

Mr. Ehsassi 21332

Pakistan

Mr. Patzer 21332

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Patzer 21332

Farmers' Markets

Mr. Johns 21332

Military Chaplaincy

Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) 21332

Employment Insurance

Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) 21332

Natural Health Products

Mrs. Gallant 21332

Contraception

Mr. Chahal 21333

Needle Exchange Program

Mr. Kurek 21333

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. O'Connell 21333

Health Care

Mr. Lamoureux 21333

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 21333

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—ArriveCAN App

Mr. Poilievre 21333

Motion 21333

Mr. Lamoureux 21335

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 21335

Mr. Johns 21336

Mr. Paul-Hus 21336

Mr. Lamoureux 21337

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 21338

Mr. Johns 21338

Ms. O'Connell 21339

Mr. McLean 21340

Mr. Thériault 21341

Mr. Johns 21341

Mr. Scarpaleggia 21342

Mrs. Vignola 21342

Mrs. Shanahan 21343

Mr. McLean 21343

Mr. Angus 21344

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné 21344

Mrs. Shanahan 21345

Mr. McLean 21345

Mr. Johns 21346

Mr. Angus 21346

Mr. Lamoureux 21348

Mr. McLean 21348

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 21348

Mr. Johns 21348

Mr. Steinley 21350

Mr. Lamoureux 21351

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 21351

Mrs. Block 21351

Mr. Lamoureux 21353

Mr. Thériault 21353

Mr. Garrison 21354

Mr. Williamson 21354

Mr. Lamoureux 21355

Mr. Thériault 21355

Mr. Garrison 21356

Mr. Lamoureux 21356

Mr. Carrie 21358

Mr. Johns 21359

Ms. Chabot 21359

Ms. O'Connell 21359

Mr. Caputo 21359

Mr. Barrett 21360

Mr. Lamoureux 21361

Mr. Trudel 21361

Mr. Johns 21362

Mrs. Kusie 21362

Ms. O'Connell 21363

Mr. Johns 21364

Mr. Morantz 21364

Mr. Jowhari 21364

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sir James Douglas

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)..... 21365

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Sgro 21365

Ukraine

Mr. Albas 21365

Youth in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam

Mr. McKinnon 21365

Ukraine

Mr. Bergeron 21366

Fair Trade Leader

Mrs. Brière 21366

Rural Canadians

Mr. Bragdon 21366

Black History Month

Mr. Turnbull 21366

150th Anniversary of Westmount

Ms. Gainey 21367

Daryl Kramp

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman 21367

Black History Month

Mr. van Koeverden 21367

ArriveCAN App

Mr. Paul-Hus 21367

Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Calkins 21368

Industries in Atlantic Canada

Mr. Kelloway 21368

Men's Sheds

Mr. Bachrach 21368

North Shore

Mrs. Gill 21368

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Shipley 21369

Indigenous Tourism

Mr. Battiste 21369

ORAL QUESTIONS

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. Poilievre 21369

Mr. LeBlanc 21369

Mr. Poilievre 21369

Mr. LeBlanc 21369

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Poilievre 21370

Mr. Champagne 21370

Mr. Poilievre 21370

Mr. Champagne 21370

Mr. Poilievre 21370

Mr. Fraser 21370

Pharmacare

Mr. Therrien 21370

Mr. Holland 21371

Dental Care

Mr. Therrien 21371

Mr. Holland 21371

Health

Mr. Boulerice 21371

Mr. Holland 21371

Mr. Davies 21371

Mr. Holland 21371

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Scheer 21371

Ms. Anand 21371

Mr. Scheer 21372

Ms. Anand 21372

Ms. Lantsman 21372

Ms. Anand 21372

Ms. Lantsman 21372

Mr. Champagne 21372

Mr. Melillo 21372

Mr. MacKinnon 21373

Mr. Melillo 21373

Mr. Guilbeault 21373

Seniors

Ms. Larouche 21373

Mr. O'Regan 21373

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 21373

Mr. Miller 21373

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 21373

Mr. Miller 21373

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. Barrett 21374

Mr. LeBlanc 21374

Mr. Barrett 21374

Mr. Duclos 21374

Mr. Brock 21374

Mr. Duclos 21374

Mr. Brock 21374

Mr. LeBlanc 21374

Northern Affairs

Ms. Idlout 21375

Mr. Vandal 21375

Health

Mr. Green 21375

Mr. Holland 21375

Labour

Mr. Van Bynen 21375

Mr. O'Regan	21375	Mr. Jowhari	21381
Royal Canadian Mounted Police		Mr. Lamoureux	21381
Mr. Berthold	21375	Mrs. Roberts	21381
Mr. Duclos	21375	Mr. Bachrach	21382
Mr. Berthold	21376	Mr. Sorbara	21382
Mr. Champagne	21376	Mr. Caputo	21383
Mr. Paul-Hus	21376	Mr. Villemure	21383
Mr. LeBlanc	21376	Ms. Blaney	21384
Mr. Paul-Hus	21376	Mr. Berthold	21384
Mr. Duclos	21376	Mr. Lamoureux	21386
Public Services and Procurement		Mrs. Vignola	21386
Mrs. Vignola	21376	Ms. Mathysen	21386
Ms. Bibeau	21376	Mr. Brock	21386
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	21376	Mr. Lamoureux	21387
Mr. Duclos	21377	Mrs. Vignola	21388
Royal Canadian Mounted Police		Ms. Blaney	21388
Mrs. Kusie	21377	Ms. Dzerowicz	21388
Mr. Duclos	21377	Ms. Mathysen	21390
Mrs. Kusie	21377	Mr. Morantz	21390
Mr. LeBlanc	21377	Mr. Villemure	21390
Mr. Genuis	21377	Mr. Sousa	21390
Mr. LeBlanc	21377		
Indigenous Affairs		Government Business No. 35—Extension of Sitting Hours and Conduct of Extended Proceedings	
Mr. Carr	21377	Notice of Closure Motion	
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	21378	Mr. MacKinnon	21392
Public Safety		Business of Supply	
Mr. Ellis	21378	Opposition Motion—ArriveCAN App	
Mr. Holland	21378	Motion	21392
Mr. Ellis	21378	Mr. McCauley	21392
Mr. Holland	21378	Mr. Sousa	21392
Justice		Mrs. Vignola	21393
Mr. Godin	21378	Ms. Zarrillo	21393
Mr. Virani	21378	Mr. McCauley	21393
Agriculture and Agri-Food		Mr. Lamoureux	21395
Mr. Blois	21378	Ms. Bérubé	21395
Mr. MacAulay	21379	Mr. Davies	21395
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship		Mr. Bezan	21395
Ms. Kwan	21379	Mr. Genuis	21395
Mr. Miller	21379	Mr. Lamoureux	21397
Labour		Division on motion deferred	21397
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	21379		
Mr. O'Regan	21379		

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada Labour Code	
Bill C-58. Second reading	21379
Motion agreed to	21381
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..	21381
Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—ArriveCAN App	
Motion	21381

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Corrections and Conditional Release Act	
Bill C-320. Third reading	21398
Ms. Larouche	21398
Ms. Blaney	21399
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	21400
Mr. Lamoureux	21401
Ms. Normandin	21402
Mr. Carrie	21404
Division on motion deferred	21405

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Genuis	21405
Mr. Sousa	21405

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Morrice	21406
-------------------	-------

Mr. Drouin	21407
------------------	-------

Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. Cannings	21408
Mr. Drouin	21408

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