



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

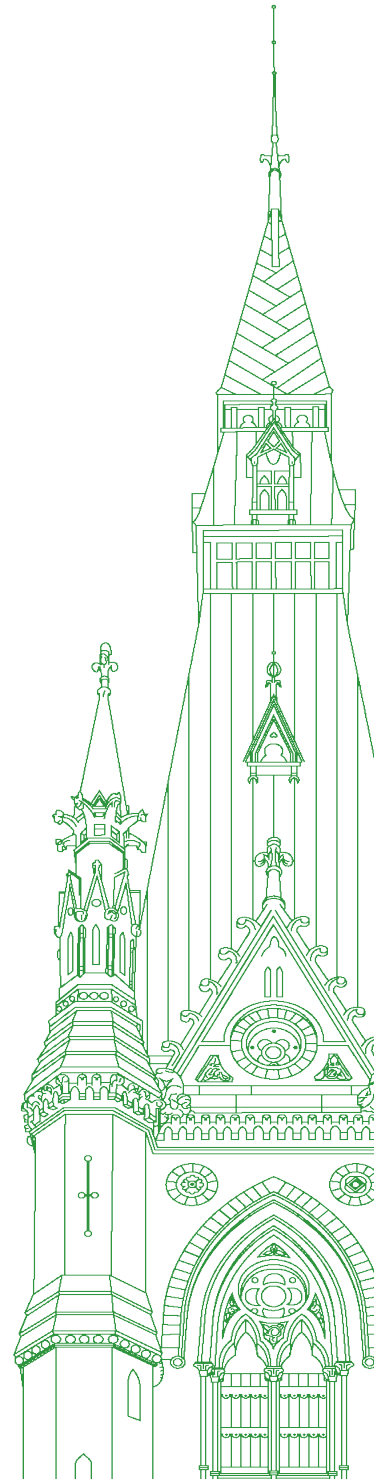
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

**Volume 152 No. 014**  
Thursday, June 12, 2025

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 12, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[Translation]

### BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that the following members have been appointed as members of the Board of Internal Economy for the purposes and under the provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act, subsection 50(2): Steven MacKinnon and Arielle Kayabaga, members of the King's Privy Council; Mark Gerretsen, representative of the government caucus; Andrew Scheer and Chris Warkentin, representatives of the Conservative caucus; and Yves Perron, representative of the Bloc Québécois.

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[English]

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(a) of the Parliament of Canada Act, the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[Translation]

Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to lay upon the table the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2025.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

## ALBANIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT

**Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-209, An Act to establish Albanian Heritage Month.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce a bill entitled the Albanian heritage month act. If passed, it would designate the month of November every year as Albanian heritage month across Canada.

I would like to thank my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville for cosponsoring this bill with me. I hope all members of the House will support it.

Canada is home to many Canadians of Albanian heritage and they have made historic contributions to our country. Those contributions touch our economic, cultural and social life. If passed, this bill would give us a special opportunity to celebrate those contributions and also Albanian heritage. Every November, it would give us another opportunity to say, “*Gëzuar muajin e trashëgimisë shqiptare*.” Every day, it would give Albanian Canadians another reason to say, “*Jam krenar që jam shqiptar*.”

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

\* \* \*

• (1005)

## PETITIONS

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising this morning to present a petition of concern to many constituents, and probably Canadians coast to coast, on the treatment of our veterans. The Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act calls on Canada to show just and due appreciation for veterans and members for their service to Canada, yet we still have a law that requires a five-year statutory limit on back pay eligibility, which the petitioners believe unjustly punishes veterans for Veterans Affairs Canada's application processing delays.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Veterans Affairs to remove any statutory limits on back pay eligibility for the disability allowance, to work with individual veterans to achieve just and due compensation for disabilities and to do so in a timely manner.

*Business of Supply***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—GC STRATEGIES INC.

**Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC)** moved:

That, given that the Auditor General found that ArriveCAN contractor, GC-Strategies Inc., was paid \$64 million from the Liberal government, and in many cases, there was no proof that any work was completed, the House call on the government to:

- (a) get taxpayers their money back, within 100 days of the adoption of this motion; and
- (b) impose a lifetime contracting ban on GCStrategies Inc., any of its subsidiaries, its founders Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, and any other entities with which those individuals are affiliated.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and address this important matter for Canadians, following the report by Canada's Auditor General.

Before I get into the substantive portion of my remarks and making a case for the imperative of getting Canadians their money back and having a lifetime ban for the contractors involved and the principals of the contracting firm in question, I want to inform the Chair that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Edmonton West.

It is a privilege to split my time with this member. We often talk about His Majesty's loyal opposition being a government in waiting, and interestingly, there was an exchange recently between the right hon. Prime Minister, who is new to this place, and the member for Edmonton West, who is an experienced parliamentarian. The Prime Minister, perhaps in jest but certainly exposing his lack of familiarity with members of the official opposition, said that the member for Edmonton West did not understand how things worked in this place and did not know the difference between a budget and estimates. I want to offer a bit of history to the Prime Minister, because it is really important the Prime Minister understands who is holding him to account.

The member for Edmonton West has an office complement that is the same size as those of all members in this House. Ministers, of course, get much larger offices. They get politically exempt staff, and they get access to full departments.

The member for Edmonton West has a couple people who work in his office, just as the rest of us do. I do not know how many people work at the Department of Finance, but there are a lot; there are thousands of them. In 2018, a budget was tabled in the House, and the member for Edmonton West, on his own, in doing his due dili-

gence reviewing the budget, found that the minister of finance and the ministry made an error of about \$150 million. The hon. member was able to correct the homework of the government, the minister, their staff and the entire ministry when they laid that budget on the table.

When we bring things before this House, it is because we have done our due diligence and because we are going to do what we have always done, which is punch above our weight. As the Liberals have the weight of the entire public service and have all the extra resources that come with serving in government, there are incredible responsibilities to get things right, to make sure they get value for taxpayers and to make sure that when mistakes are made, they are corrected, and that when value is not received, it is corrected.

What we saw in the Auditor General's reports this week confirms what Canada's Conservatives had raised the alarm bell about in the previous Parliament. On a range of issues the Auditor General looked at, she found that there were massive cost overruns and in fact negligence by the Liberal government, specifically in the use of the contractor GC Strategies, which was the preferred contractor in what is now known as the arrive scam scandal. This was the app the government originally pegged at costing \$80,000. It ultimately cost many orders of magnitude more than that, in excess of \$64 million. Value for money just was not there.

For context and for new members to this place, it is important to note that when the official opposition initially raised concerns about the ArriveCAN app, the Liberals said that the app worked great, that it worked as intended and that they received value for money and had no regrets. They paraded people through committee over and over again with that refrain, but it turns out that simply was not the case.

● (1010)

The then leader of the opposition, Mr. Poilievre, called for an Auditor General investigation, and there was a vote in the House. The Liberals and the cabinet, which is the executive responsible for this project, this massive boondoggle, voted against having the Auditor General take a look at it. Why would they not want the investigation if they were so proud of the project and it had worked as intended? Of course, they knew that it was a corrupt process, and they did not want it to come to light, but we did our work in holding the government to account, checking its homework, and we found the errors. We found the gift that had occurred.

It is not just about the nearly \$100 million in contracts that GC Strategies was awarded, as a company owned by Mr. Kristian Firth and Mr. Darren Anthony; it is about the procurement processes that were not followed. Let us take for example the imperative of security clearances. The contracts this company was awarded required security clearances. I use the term “company” loosely as these were a couple of guys working in their basement, getting multi-million dollar IT contracts from the Government of Canada, but they were not IT experts. Some of the departments they worked for included public safety, CBSA and national defence. The Auditor General found that in 50% of contracts requiring security clearances, departments cannot prove that these workers, subcontractors for GC Strategies, had the security clearance, and in over 20% of contracts, workers were actively on the job without a valid security clearance. The Liberal government is not one that takes security seriously if this is what it deems an acceptable procurement practice.

Anyone who has ever had a project done at home, if they get a deck built at their house and they put a deposit down and the work is complete and satisfactory, they pay the contractor and thank them for their hard work. What is going to be shocking for Canadians is what we saw here; in 46% of the contracts, there was no proof of work delivered, but the government paid in 100% of the cases. It is unacceptable, and we know it is because no household would do it, no small business would do it and certainly the Government of Canada should not have done it.

What we are asking for is reasonable, but it is also the minimum expectation that Canadians have of us, as Parliament: Within 100 days of the passage of this motion, the government would get Canadians their money back and not simply let it stand that the company involved in this fraud not be allowed to bid on government contracts for seven years; rather, the company, its principals and subsidiaries would have a lifetime ban from doing work for the Government of Canada on behalf of Canadians. This is what Canadians expect of us.

We will hear the rise of all kinds of partisan hackles over the course of today, but this is a great opportunity. We are going to hear that it is a new Liberal government. If it is, then it is time for the Liberals to let us smell that new-car smell, that new-government smell; rise above the partisanship, the instinct to oppose this for the sake of opposing it; and vote for this common-sense motion.

Let us get Canadians their money back, get accountability by banning these contractors. Let us show Canadians that when we tax them a dollar, it is going to go as far as it can, and if someone takes advantage of the Government of Canada and Canadians, we will not let it stand.

• (1015)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, Mr. Firth, whom the Conservatives have been after for a number of years now, was actually part of a company known as Coredal. Coredal was started up back in 2010, and, up to 2015, it received many different contracts under Pierre Poilievre and Stephen Harper's government.

I am wondering if the member would apply the very same principles to Mr. Firth in that time, when the Conservatives gave him

### *Business of Supply*

contracts, that he is applying with the former administration. Yes, Pierre Poilievre was there, front and centre with Stephen Harper, part of that government. Today, we have a new Prime Minister and a new government, even further away from Mr. Firth than the member's own leader.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, if it is the position of the government that it would like to take a look at the contracts that occurred over that period of time, and there is a finding that there was fraud on the government, that work was not delivered, that security clearances were not in place, anyone involved then should be banned for life from doing business with the Government of Canada, and let us get that money back too.

However, today, the question is, is the government going to support this motion? Any government speakers rising today should indicate how far back we want to go to get Canadians their money back. I do not think there should be a limit, because we must get value for Canadians.

• (1020)

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my Conservative colleague on his speech, which gets the day off to a good start on a motion that the Bloc Québécois intends to support, albeit with some reservations. It is a bit unrealistic to think that the money wasted in the GC Strategies scandal will be able to be recovered.

I will go back in history because these scandals are piling up. There was the sponsorship scandal, in which only about \$8 million was recovered out of the hundreds of millions of dollars wasted by the Liberal government of the day. Then there was the WE scandal, which was a gross mismanagement of public funds. Now we are faced with another scandal of the same kind, the GC Strategies scandal.

Certainly, we want to call for the money wasted in these scandals to be recovered, but should we not start by reviewing the rules governing public contracts? That is what I find troubling, the lack of accountability. What rules can be put in place to ensure that this does not happen again? History will continue to repeat itself because nothing is being done to fix this problem.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question.

[English]

It has been a difficult time for Canadians, when we look at the last 10 years, but of course, as the member indicated, it is not just limited to the last 10 years. We saw that with the Liberal sponsorship scandal as well. We absolutely need to have rigorous processes in place, and it is encouraging to hear the Bloc is going to support the motion, because we have to get that accountability.

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When we now see that the opposition has a majority on committees, there is a real opportunity for opposition parties to ensure we hold the government to account at public accounts, at the government operations committee and at all government-chaired committees as well. We look forward to working with my colleague to make sure we get that accountability for Canadians.

**Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary alluded to the fact that Mr. Firth, in 2010, was also given contracts under Harper. In fact, my understanding is that GC Strategies was incorporated in 2015. The issue at hand could not pertain to any contracts that were awarded in 2010.

I would like my friend to clarify that point of fact.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, unsurprisingly, the member is correct in her discernment of the facts. The issue we are dealing with here is one that was reviewed by the Auditor General. The Auditor General was the one who made the finding we have here today, and that is the basis for this motion to get the funds back. There has not been any evidence presented to independent officers of Parliament about this type of gift or fraud in the period that the parliamentary secretary had indicated, but as I said, if they are supporting us getting more of Canadians' tax dollars back and preventing future frauds, let us do so.

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise on this issue. It has consumed my life in the operations committee for several years. Before I start, though, I would like to seek the House's permission, as this is my first time speaking in a speech, to comment on the last election.

I want to thank my constituents in Edmonton West for sending me here for the fourth time. I certainly appreciate the support, and I pledge to continue to serve the good people of Edmonton West, or as I call it, "Edmonton West Edmonton Mall". I want to thank my wife, Sasha, for her continued support. This is the fourth election. She has been through probably 15 elections with me, four for myself. I thank her for her continued support. I realize that she does it so that she can get me out of the house and out of her hair, but I thank her very much.

I want to thank my son Parker, who was my campaign manager. He did a phenomenal job. It was his first time as campaign manager and his third time helping me in the campaign. He did such a great job that we had our second-best results ever. I thank Parker. I would also like to thank my other son, Jensen, for his continued support. I thank my office staff, Oula, Linda, Margaret and Mick, for their continued support to the constituents, as well as my financial agent, Dennis, who actually, unlike the government, knows how to put together a budget, apparently.

I thank the many volunteers. There are too many to mention, but there are some special ones I want to thank: Barb, Judy, Graham, Daime, Brandon, Donovan, Gilles, Jeff, Yolanda, Cheryl and Isabelita, as well as the kids from Parkland Immanuel Christian School who came out in force and door knocked with us, especially Tristan and Braiden, as well as Cheryl, who helped out, and all the door knockers who helped us hit 48,000 doors last election. We have a lot of new communities in my riding, as 28% of the riding is new, so I want to let those people know that we will look forward to serving them.

On the issue at hand, GC Strategies and the arrive scam, I have been here for 10 years now. I have never seen the country so consumed with a scandal. We have had plenty from the government. Of course, we had the SNC-Lavalin scandal, in which the former prime minister interfered with the justice department. We saw the former prime minister and his cabinet interfere in the WE Charity scandal, trying to funnel \$900 million to their friends and family members.

We had the green slush fund, in which the current finance minister oversaw \$400 million being gifted by Liberal insiders and, of course, the Edmonton-based "other Randy" scandal.

Of all these bigger scandals, we have to wonder why Canadians were so consumed by ArriveCAN. I think that, even though ArriveCAN was not as large financially, it is because so many Canadians had to deal with the broken ArriveCAN app. Millions had to endure the problems with ArriveCAN at the borders, coming in at the airports, dealing with an app that did not work, dealing with an app that sometimes would not work with certain Wi-Fi networks, enduring missed flights and long waits at the airport, enduring this horrible app. They thought it was a simple app that only cost \$80,000, but then they found out that this app, which sent them into long lines and sometimes sent them into quarantine by mistake, actually ended up costing over \$60 million.

I mentioned how it actually accidentally sent people into quarantine. An app upgrade came out and actually sent 10,000 people, by mistake, into quarantine. We found out later that the government said that it did not actually test the upgrade before issuing it. Can we imagine? The app cost \$60 million and somehow the government forgot. It did not have the resources to check if the update worked, but that is okay. Again, what do we expect from an app that only cost \$80 million, we think? I say "we think" because even the Auditor General cannot figure out how much the app cost as the bookkeeping from the government was so poorly done.

Literally, the departments have tens of thousands of people working in their accounting departments. The AG has a very large force, and they could not figure out how much this cost. Of course, we know the root cause of the problem. The root cause is Liberal incompetence. The cause, of course, is the Liberals' almost stalker-like affection for handing out Canadian taxpayers' money to high-priced management consultants, much like McKinsey.

• (1025)

McKinsey, if anyone has not realized, is probably one of the worst corporations in the world. It helped supercharge the opioid crisis. It represents some of the most despotic regimes in the world. If McKinsey were a human being, it would be a Bond villain, yet the government violated procurement rules to shove money into McKinsey's pockets. Even when government bureaucrats came forward and said, "We have the bodies available to do this work", the government broke rules to give money to McKinsey.

It was the same with ArriveCAN and GC Strategies. GC Strategies received close to \$100 million from the Liberal government since it formed in 2015. The company had two employees working in someone's basement, doing no IT work, doing no other work except for getting government business and then contracting it out to someone else. The two employees had no programming skills; the only skill they seemed to have was how to work with the Liberal government to fleece money from Canadians. They basically won contracts and then subcontracted them out to others, taking a 15% to 30% cut along the way.

In what world does a company with just two people get so much money and do no work? It is a Liberal world, apparently. GC Strategies even managed to win contracts and then subcontract them out to Microsoft. Microsoft is a pretty large company, yet Microsoft was not able to win the contracts from the government, but GC Strategies did and subcontracted them out.

What happened when the outrageous conduct came to light? The Liberals, instead of fixing it or saying that there was an error and that they would look after it, were gaslighting Canadians. They insisted that the ArriveCAN app saved thousands of lives. Eight different ministers, including the former prime minister and the parliamentary secretary, stood in the House and said that ArriveCAN saved up to 10,000 lives. Then they accused the opposition of being anti-vax and anti-science if they did not believe in the ArriveCAN app. I guess the Auditor General must be anti-science as well, because she came out with two damning reports on the government and its conduct in dealing with GC strategies.

Procurement has gotten so bad with the government that it actually forced bureaucrats and officials to attest in writing to following government procurement rules before they award a contract. I would have thought it would be inferred, as a condition of employment, that someone is not going to break the law or break rules when awarding contracts, but not with the Liberals. They actually forced them to put it in writing.

Let us talk about GC Strategies and the issues we are trying to get money back for. Here are some of the issues. The company created and used fraudulent documents to ensure subcontractors' resumes met criteria for contracts. That is fraud. There were subcontracted individuals, but their work and payments were funded through other companies using the same general contract. That is fraud. Without knowledge or consent of individuals, GC Strategies used their identities to bill the government. The company used contractors with no security clearance, despite attesting they actually had security clearance.

It cost \$60 million for ArriveCAN. We know that the government has the ability to get the money back. We know the issue is

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serious enough that the RCMP actually raided the home of one of the owners to seize documents. The government needs to stop coddling its friends, high-priced management consultants. It needs to start getting value for money. It can start by clawing back the fraudulently stolen money from GC Strategies that was taken from Canadian taxpayers. It is time to put our taxpayers, not Liberal insiders, first.

• (1030)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will get an opportunity a bit later to add a lot more detail to what the member is stating, but I want to go back to something. The member's colleague posed a question to one of her colleagues from the Conservative Party, saying that GC Strategies came into being in 2015. Mr. Firth had a company, with a partner, that actually amalgamated into GC Strategies. Mr. Firth was involved in that company and received literally millions of dollars in contracts from Stephen Harper and Pierre Poilievre when Pierre Poilievre was part of the Stephen Harper government. I posed a legitimate question to the member's colleague, and his colleague even acknowledged that fact.

Would the member still apply the same principles? If he agrees he would apply the same principles, does he believe that the House does have an obligation to look into Coredal, the same company that Mr. Firth was involved in?

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North's intervention was nonsensical, as usual.

The Auditor General looked at the contracting and did not find issues from the Harper era. The issues seemed to start in 2015, when the Liberal government took over. The Auditor General did two different reports on contracting around the issue, and not once was an issue brought up of poor procurement or fraudulent activity during the Harper era. It was all done during the Liberal era.

I think the gentleman needs to reflect on himself and his comments, and look inward to see where the corruption is.

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the discussions we have heard this morning are almost unbelievable. No one seems to dispute the fact that Quebecers and Canadians were taken in by a company called GC Strategies, and that we are owed several million dollars.

This morning's motion proposes that the government take steps to recover that money. What, then, are the member from Winnipeg North, who is a member of the governing party, and the Conservative members debating? They are wondering whether we would be demanding the same thing if the Conservatives were in power.

Of course we would, because we have been robbed. We want our money back. With all due respect, we are not interested in who stole it. We want it back.

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What does my colleague think? Can we agree that a Conservative, Liberal or even Bloc Québécois government would agree that we want our money back?

• (1035)

[English]

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is a valid one about whether we would ask for the money back. Of course we would. The Liberal government, instead of admitting fault, tries to place the blame elsewhere.

I want to quote the ADM of PSPC on the issue: “we have the ability to recover the funds from the suppliers...it's...our regular practice to do so.” This is the ADM's stating that it is a regular practice to claw back from contractors money that was taken illegally, or fraudulently obtained money.

Why is the government fighting us on this?

**Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North has stood up in the House and vociferously defended the Liberal WE scandal, the Liberal SNC-Lavalin scandal, the Liberal green slush fund scandal and Justin Trudeau's many ethics violations, yet he stands up in the House today and refers to a time when we had good governance in this country.

I ask the member opposite this: Why is it that the Liberal government opposite is refusing to get our money back? Canadians want their money back. It was stolen from us. We would like to have it back, and it is actually nonsensical that the government would not be asking for the money back as well.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, it is not just that the government is refusing to get our money back. The scandal was first exposed in 2022 in the operations committee, and one would think that the government would have actually stopped granting contracts to GC Strategies then. However, it continued to give it contracts until March 2024, two years after the scandal came to light. Not only is the government refusing to get taxpayer money back; it also fuelled the problem by continuing to give contracts to a company it knew was defrauding Canadians. It is disgusting.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we agree that the observations contained in the report on the contract for professional services awarded to GC Strategies are unacceptable. I would like to thank the Auditor General of Canada and her team for their hard work.

Based on audits and verifications conducted between 2023 and 2025, Public Services and Procurement Canada is changing and modernizing how it awards contracts for professional services where required. The objective is to adopt measures aimed at reducing market risks, set goals and define the tasks needed to make an informed decision with regard to a tailored solution when we call on private companies and, lastly, improve management practices when it comes to contracts already under way.

We totally agree with the Auditor General of Canada when she says that we do not need more rules; rather, we need to make sure that our public servants properly apply the ones already in place.

That is why the monitoring framework surrounding contracting practices has been enhanced.

We also need to make sure that we are working with suppliers with unimpeachable integrity. In 2024, the Auditor General of Canada made recommendations in the report on ArriveCAN. Since then, the government has done its homework. I am pleased to inform the House that seven out of the eight recommendations have been implemented: require more accurate financial records in order to correctly allocate expenses to projects; fully document interactions with suppliers and prohibit them from participating both in the drafting of the call for tenders and in the bidding process; require that all contracts and task authorizations comply with all applicable policies and guidelines; ensure that the required experience and qualifications are clearly defined from the outset; clarify requirements and work activities and ensure that deliverables are clearly defined.

Our new government is determined to provide a better framework for federal procurement practices. From now on, public servants will have to justify their needs and follow the strictest standards when they are seeking professional services to support the implementation of their programs.

• (1040)

The Auditor General of Canada made no new recommendations this year. In other words, she thinks we are doing our job.

I would also like to point out to members that the Government of Canada updated the ineligibility and suspension policy last year. To better respond to wrongdoing, the government recently created an office of supplier integrity and compliance, affirming its desire to do business only with companies that have the highest standards.

With respect to GC Strategies specifically, Public Services and Procurement Canada suspended the company's security status in March 2024. That would have already prevented the company from participating in all federal government contracts with security requirements.

We have done even more. GC Strategies has been suspended; it can no longer be awarded any contracts for professional services or other types of contracts by Public Services and Procurement Canada. What is more, last week, the office of supplier integrity and compliance declared GC Strategies ineligible for Government of Canada contracts for the next seven years, from June 6, 2025, to June 6, 2032. This is a severe sanction, reflecting the fact the government is not taking this lightly and that it is acting decisively. I can also say that, even at the end of its suspension, the company is in no way assured of being able to bid on contracts issued by the Government of Canada.



Our friends across the aisle had an opportunity to adopt these measures, since the same individuals received contracts between 2010 and 2015, but they did nothing. It is the Liberal Party of Canada that is implementing these measures.

Moreover, as part of the procedures under way, the company could lose its ability to receive contracts from the Crown indefinitely if it is convicted by the courts of fraud against the Crown. In short GC Strategies will not get another penny of taxpayers money.

When it comes to reimbursement, we will first have to get a court order. If our attorneys can provide that there was indeed fraud or overbilling, we will not hesitate to demand exemplary damages.

As for ArriveCAN, specific allegations of misconduct have been filed, and the Canada Border Services Agency has launched an investigation that is still under way. As my hon. colleague from Edmonton West mentioned, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was made aware of these allegations. However, the CBSA did not wait to complete its investigation before taking action. It has already taken measures to improve the management and control of its procurement processes.

It implemented a procurement improvement plan to enhance its practices and make sure that all of its purchases comply with the Government of Canada's procurement rules, support the CBSA's mandate and bring value to Canadians. The improvement plan includes several important elements. From now on, agency employees with financial authority at the national level will be required to follow four compulsory courses on procurement contracts. Employees are also required to disclose all of their interactions with prospective suppliers. In addition, the agency has established a centre of expertise to help employees fully understand their powers and their obligations. The agency now has a purchasing and contracting branch with the power to centralize all procurement activities. Thus, as part of the annual planning, budget and approval process, the agency now requires all divisions and regions to prepare detailed multi-year budget plans for their procurement and contracting activities. These plans will be meticulously studied and approved by the agency's governance committee. The agency also recently established a new recourse, standards and program integrity branch, which will control management activities and implement a culture of excellence when it comes to program and service delivery, including in areas related to procurement activities. The idea is to enhance procurement procedures at the agency and enable it to proceed with confidence and diligence in the awarding of future contracts.

Our government is intent on ensuring compliance with procurement procedures for goods and services. Offenders will be held appropriately accountable. The CBSA shares this conviction, and is in agreement with our actions. The agency's directors have already publicly indicated several times in committee and before the members of the House that they are taking the problem seriously and that they have implemented the necessary measures.

In addition to the agency's efforts to improve their procurement practices and enhance monitoring, Public Services and Procurement Canada is also taking steps to enhance every aspect of the federal procurement system. We assure the House that we will use the re-

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sults of the latest Auditor General's report to further improve how the Government of Canada does business with its suppliers.

To carry out its mandate, the agency is always looking to innovate and improve its tools so that legitimate travellers, goods and services can circulate freely at our country's borders, while ensuring the safety and security of Canadians and respecting their rights and freedoms.

● (1045)

I will conclude my remarks on the subject by highlighting the work that Canada Border Services Agency employees do every day from coast to coast to coast. The agency has an important mandate, and its employees are well aware of it. Today more than ever, border security is a priority concern for Canadians, as it is for this government. This work is essential for protecting Canadians and contributing to our country's prosperity.

I think that all this illustrates the government's commitment to establishing and improving sound practices when it comes to contracts and learning. Our new government believes that all of the negligence and excess associated with GC Strategies and other suppliers are unacceptable. In the last Parliament, MPs and the Auditor General worked extensively to ensure that the contracts awarded to suppliers by the government are scrutinized, and that they continue to be scrutinized in the future. The government will demand accountability for any wrongdoing. It now has the means of doing so effectively, while ensuring that its public servants exercise the appropriate control measures. Canadians have the right to know that their hard-earned money is well managed. Given the new guarantees and rigorous measures implemented to hold GC Strategies accountable and to prevent any further violations on the part of other suppliers, we can now look to the future and focus on the work ahead.

● (1050)

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member continues to claim that he represents a new government, but it is a new government made up of the same people.

My question is simple. If this is truly a new government, will it immediately demand reimbursement of the funds that were spent?

Will the Liberals support our motion? Will they try to correct the situation? Will they demand a reimbursement? I want a yes or no answer.

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**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, the government did more than that. It created the office of supplier integrity and compliance, a body independent of politicians. It will do the job because we gave it the tools to do so, the tools our Minister of Government Transformation intends to give it. These digital tools will allow it to monitor contracts with suppliers.

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is something sweet about the candour shown by the new Liberal member, who is convinced that this new government will better manage public funds.

The creation of the agency my colleague was talking about is a bit like if Don Vito Corleone launched an investigation into the mafia. It is a bit surreal.

There is also something important in my colleague's remarks, and I will ask him a pretty simple question. He says that GC Strategies was suspended from all public contracting for seven years. Personally, I think they should have been banned for life.

Who is banned from receiving public contracts? Is it GC Strategies, or Mr. Firth and Mr. Anthony?

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, after seven years, GC Strategies will not automatically become an eligible supplier again. The registrar will carefully review the situation and, because they are an independent entity, they will have to do the work suggested by the hon. member for Drummond to see if there are any links to other individuals besides this company. It should be noted that, in the case of GC Strategies' suspension, this process is independent and completely free of political interference.

[English]

**Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this bureaucracy that is being set up is just another example of the smoke and mirrors. There is no need for democracy if the corruption was not existing in the Liberal government right from the very beginning.

My question is very simple. We can have all the bureaucracies we want. What steps are this parliamentary secretary, the Minister of Public Safety and the government taking, specifically, to get the taxpayers' money back that GC Strategies stole from the taxpayers?

Like I said, the bureaucracy does not get money back. You set up all these rules so it does not happen anymore. Well, it should not have been happening in the first place. Canadian taxpayers want to know where their money is, so what steps are you taking?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Questions go through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, we live under the rule of law. The government provided the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with all the information in its possession so that the RCMP could determine whether there were grounds for legal action. That is fine, because we expect governments not to interfere in the management of wrongdoing.

We have passed on the information to the RCMP, and should charges be laid, we will act in an exemplary manner to ensure that the individuals and companies concerned repay the money owed to the government.

[English]

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I completely support this motion. It is very clear, and I put it to the member, that we need to start a law proceeding, based not, as the hon. secretary of state suggested, on fraud but on breach of contract, and it should not stop with GC Strategies. We should go back and also sue IBM for damages for the failed Phoenix pay system, which cost this country billions. Does the member agree?

• (1055)

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, our government has put in place tools that will help us take swift action from now on when there are signs of wrongdoing or non-compliance with contracts. That is what we are focused on, and we want to move forward. We believe that situations like this will never happen again because of the framework we have adopted.

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the question has already been asked of my colleague across the way, but unfortunately, I do not think he understood it. I will repeat it slowly.

Will the government take steps to recover the money stolen from Quebecers and Canadians?

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I may not have understood the question, but it seems the hon. member did not understand the answer either.

We have forwarded all the information to the RCMP, and we have set up an office that will be responsible for verifying compliance and determining whether additional action should be taken. We cannot do more, because any further action would be political interference.

[English]

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was kind of shocked by one of the comments my colleague made in his speech. He said that from now on, regarding procurement, we will uphold high standards of integrity and follow the rules.

I am wondering, does that imply, then, that for the last 10 years in the government, there was no requirement to act with integrity or follow the rules with purchasing? That appears to be the case with GC Strategies and many other issues.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything we can to strengthen our approach to detecting fraud and other wrongdoing. Several potential cases of fraudulent billing have been detected. Let us be clear. That is unacceptable.

We will suspend the security clearance of the subcontractors involved and turn the files over to the RCMP as soon as there is sufficient evidence to justify doing so, so that it can conduct a thorough and independent investigation. Recommendations may then be made to the Attorney General of Canada to initiate proceedings to recover the money.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think this should provide assurances to individuals who are following the debate. When we take a look at the 2024 Auditor General's report, eight recommendations came out of it. Seven of the eight have been completed, and one is still in process. Then we have this report that is not forwarding any additional recommendations. I think that speaks well, that the civil servants are, in fact, responding positively to the 2024 recommendations.

I am wondering if my colleague can provide his thoughts on the civil service responding to the 2024 report.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. There are no new recommendations in this year's report. The Auditor General simply asked us to continue to diligently apply the recommendations that have already been implemented.

There is just one more recommendation left to implement, and that is to obtain more detailed billing for projects and contracts in terms of the hours and type of work provided, and the CBSA is on track to address that recommendation.

That is a score of 7.9 out of 8.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from La Prairie—Atateken said this was unacceptable. What is unacceptable is the fact that the government did not even verify 50% of the contracts awarded, worth a total of \$64 million, to see if the work had been done. What is more, these contracts were awarded untendered to people who did not even have the technical expertise. Our system includes something called ministerial accountability.

Who was the minister responsible for ensuring that the contracts were fulfilled? Is the parliamentary secretary willing to admit that his government dropped the ball and that this was a failure? No, he is blaming it on the civil service. What kind of message does that send to Canadians? It is never the government's fault. They did not even verify 50% of public contracts to see whether—

• (1100)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I must allow a few seconds for the hon. parliamentary secretary to respond.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Jacques Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to oversee the work done by our public servants. We take that responsibility seriously. We will do it.

The member for Rimouski—La Matapédia may have forgotten that when the ArriveCAN contract was awarded, there was a bit of a pandemic that—

### *Business of Supply*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for those who missed the last few seconds, there is a major accountability issue. Honestly, I really wish we had a full hour to discuss this scandal, which is going from bad to worse.

I have two amazing colleagues who are no longer here in the House. One of them was my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, who sat on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, and the other was the member for Terrebonne, who sat on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I salute them for the tremendous amount of work they did. I am going to pick up where they left off as a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

I have nine minutes left, and I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I will sum things up. To begin with, of course, there are two parts to the Conservative motion. The first is to get back the money that was stolen, money that was paid for work that was not done. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the Bloc Québécois is very much in favour of that. The second is to impose a lifetime contracting ban on GC Strategies so that none of its subsidiaries can ever do anything again. That makes perfect sense because they defrauded taxpayers.

I have one small point to make before I get into more detail on the 100 days to get the money back. Is 100 days realistic? When we make goals in life, we have to think about whether they are necessary and realistic. One hundred days is unprecedented. It would be quite the feat for the government to be able to that. That being said, it is essential that we recover that money.

We obviously support the Conservatives' motion, but I would like to get to the bottom of things. In the last Parliament, it was quite shocking to see one of the co-owners at the bar trying to defend himself. Ultimately, and I say this to new members, we were a laughingstock. We were a laughingstock because we were shown how easy it is to get around our safety nets, to thwart our efforts to be diligent and to properly manage taxpayers' money. The door is wide open. The oversight is not there.

As the Auditor General reiterated, she did not say that nothing happened. She said that there were so many problems she could not count or corroborate them all, that she had not been able to review the contracts to see what work should have been done. Furthermore, the pandemic was a catch-all excuse. In life, when something as major as that happens, people do what it takes to come up with an effective plan. I am tired of hearing that word. I want to hear about remediation instead.

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Today, I want to raise two points. First, we have a new government with powerful aspirations. Whether they materialize is a matter of seeing is believing. That said, we have just been informed that we have an incoming clerk of the Privy Council. I sincerely hope he will listen to all Bloc Québécois members. If there is one party in this House that truly works to ensure accountability and the sound management of public funds, it is the Bloc Québécois. I know what I am talking about. I have filled out my share of grant applications and I have helped people fill out endless reports just to get a few thousands of dollars.

• (1105)

I hope that Mr. Sabia hears this message, because we will be meeting with him at the Standing Committee on Government Operations, where we will have the opportunity to tell him about all the measures that should be put in place. When I hear the new government members saying that they do not want this to happen again, I feel like saying, "Let us talk about this again in a decade." However, I am a positive person who wants to make a difference. Mr. Sabia has a good track record as an agent of change. The Prime Minister wants to make changes in Canada to make it a country worthy of its name, worthy of the wealth of a G7 country.

We need to begin by closing the loopholes, implementing meaningful accountability measures and recognizing our 350,000 public servants. They are the ones I am talking to. I know many of them. These people are telling me that the government is neglecting them, that it does not recognize their value and that it is always sending them subcontractors who get paid double what they do, when they are perfectly capable of doing the work. They are saying that the government may even be taking them for fools. People have lost confidence in the quality of services. We have people calling us every week. Yesterday, I spoke to a woman who received a letter regarding her guaranteed income supplement. She did not get that money. Six months later, she was told that it was not the right amount. I know that, for individuals, we are talking about maybe a few hundred dollars, but in the case before us today, we are talking about millions of dollars in taxpayer money.

Let us start by cleaning house. Then we can put measures in place to ensure proper oversight. Honestly, when I see the official opposition always looking to tear down and destroy what the government is trying to build and when I see the government doing everything it can to deny, hide and withhold information that Quebecers and Canadians need to know, I can say that, every time, the Bloc Québécois is the one that manages to get to the bottom of what is happening here, to get to the bottom of the government's corruption and collusion.

I am a businesswoman. I have worked in the community sector, and I have also been a public servant. Networking, referrals, mutual support and awarding contracts among friends are all standard practice, but let us look at the context. When I am doing business, it is my money we are talking about. I am the one who negotiates with contractors and suppliers, and I do so using my own money. What happened in this case is that private sector strategies were used to award contracts paid for with taxpayers' money. That is completely unacceptable. With every action the government takes, with every measure it implements, it has to bear in mind that 40 million Canadians have contributed to the pot.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, understands the importance of procurement and transparency and has emphasized how important it is that we build strength in the system. One of those strengths would be to ensure that civil servants do what has been suggested by the Auditor General.

Would the member not agree with the assessment I just put on the record?

• (1110)

[Translation]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I do hope things turn around. I hope that when we come back in September, the clerk will have had time to get to the bottom of this and recover the stolen money.

It would be nice if we could put some measures in place to ensure that there are calls for tender rather than endless subcontracts. It would also be nice to be able to restore the reputation of public servants and recognize the excellent work they do by reviewing their processes. They are our brain power. These individuals have a great deal of expertise, and we have been neglecting them for decades.

[English]

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take away specifically from the importance of this issue with GC Strategies. Obviously, it is a huge scandal. However, I am wondering if the member has any comments about how this is really part of a long list of scandals with the Liberal government and its misuse of taxpayer dollars, whether it is SNC-Lavalin or the WE Charity, and the list goes on. We have really seen this culture of well-connected Liberal insiders and the misuse of taxpayer funds with the Liberal government.

I am just wondering if my colleague has any further comments on that.

[Translation]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Speaker, WE Charity was my initiation. As new members, we spent the entire summer probing a contract that had been awarded. It is normal to move quickly. It is normal to take action when there is an emergency. However, there are two ways of going about it. We can try to put out a forest fire with a small pail or, on the contrary, we can look at what is happening and make sure we have the right equipment to get the situation under control.

We saw the scope of the machinery of government. The pandemic was not the reason for the swift reaction. This is systemic. The government is proving that the system is dysfunctional. Right now I am thinking of the taxpayers' money and I am calling for change on their behalf.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague and congratulate her on her speech.

In her report, the Auditor General of Canada mentioned that more than half the \$64 million in contracts were paid without the government checking whether the work had been done or produced.

My colleague mentioned that she was a businesswoman. When people manage money, do they pay bills without checking whether they received the product or service? I would like my colleague to answer that simple question.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this question because people need to have this information. Some of those who are watching at home will be looking for a few dollars, either for summer jobs or through the New Horizons for Seniors program. If there is one sentence missing from their financial report or if their budget is not balanced, then they will not get their \$1,000 in support.

I just took a conflict of interest and ethics course. Any time that I am unsure of whether I have been offered a gift and what I should do, I pass the information on to the Ethics Commissioner.

I agree with my colleague: How is it that the government is not even capable of doing what is required of us, as members of Parliament and citizens?

• (1115)

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this week, the Auditor General of Canada released four important reports. It is too bad that these facts are only coming to light today, after the election campaign. I think it would have been in the public interest for Canadians to have access to this information sooner. It might have changed the way they viewed this old Liberal government. After all, this is exactly what we need to fight political cynicism.

Today's Conservative motion focuses primarily on the revelations made by the Auditor General of Canada in her report on professional services contracts with GC Strategies. Her report is devastating to this government. It reflects a culture that fails to prioritize accountability.

First, it is important to review the facts. This company was awarded contracts to create the ArriveCAN app, which was developed in 2020. The total cost of this app, which two Canadian firms managed to recreate in a single weekend, was \$64.5 million. This cost was clearly excessive.

I would remind the House that the update was initially supposed to cost only \$80,000. What is more, GC Strategies employed only two people and did not provide any IT services. Paying over \$60 million to two people with an idea so they could recruit qualified people is not what I would call efficient management of resources. I hope the Liberal government will agree with me on that.

Let us go back to the Auditor General's report on all the other contracts examined. For contracts under \$40,000, the government can dispense with a call for bids. If we want things to change, we need to give that some thought. These are contracts that are deemed non-competitive. However, federal organizations are required to assess whether there would be benefits to calling for bids. Two-thirds of the \$200,000 awarded to GC Strategies for this type of contract

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was not subject to this critical assessment. Who is accountable for that? It should be the Liberal government.

Let us go further. Thirty-three of the contracts awarded to GC Strategies required a security clearance. I want to emphasize the word "security". For 50% of these contracts, the federal government cannot even show that the necessary authorizations were granted. For 21% of the contracts with security requirements, people worked on projects without ever getting their security clearance. That is more than one in five people.

The report mentions a contract awarded by National Defence. If there is one area where subcontractors should have their security clearances, it is that one. There is more. The Auditor General tells us that, for 33% of contracts, federal organizations were not even able to demonstrate that the people had the required experience or qualifications. They either forgot or did not bother to check.

There is also the whole issue of oversight. When people argued that federal employees had to go back to working in the office again, Ottawa agreed and started waging a battle against civil servants. However, when it comes to awarding contracts, Ottawa simply receives a time sheet and that is that. Someone looks at it one, two, three or maybe five times, and then it gets approved.

Poorly documented descriptions of the work performed? No big deal. No time sheet? No problem. In the case of one \$3.3-million contract with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the department provided time sheets for only one out of 25 contract resources. What did the government do? It put the cheque in the mail. This is our money. When GC Strategies was hired, Ottawa had no idea if the fees paid exceeded market rates. Due diligence is not the Liberals' strong suit.

That is not all. I saved the best for last. In about half of the contracts, the government had little to no evidence that the work had been performed, but the cheque was sent out anyway. Basically, the government hired people without determining whether they were qualified or had the necessary security clearances. Now it does not know if the work was actually performed. That is where things stand. Wow.

• (1120)

One thing that puzzles me is that, for all of the contracts that the Office of the Auditor General of Canada analyzed, the federal organizations justified their use of subcontractors by giving reasons like acquiring specialized expertise, managing unexpected increases in workload or filling in for public servants during temporary absences. Correct me if I am wrong, but would it not make sense to make better use of our public service? Why can public servants not work overtime if there is an unexpected increase in workload or if some employees are absent? If we need specialized expertise, would it not make sense to develop that expertise in-house? It is all the more odd that the government was using subcontractors, with the consequences that we have seen, at a time when it was hiring huge numbers of public servants.

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That brings me to the central and possibly the most important point of this report. Since 2015, more than \$18 billion has been spent on informatics services. The bill went from \$1.3 billion a year to \$2.8 billion a year. The thing that amazes me is that this is not the first IT project that went off the rails. There was Phoenix, the Canadian Firearms Registry and the Canada Border Services Agency assessment and revenue management system. This is not the first time public money has been wasted on IT.

In Quebec, there was SAAQclic, which cost \$500 million. The government is holding a public inquiry into that. The federal government should follow its example. It may be time for Canada to set limits, considering we know that Ottawa has spent \$1.5 billion every year since 2015. That is \$18 billion more. The annual bill is now \$2.8 billion. There must be quite a few SAAQclics in the federal government apparatus.

It is 2025. Information technology is a huge part of our lives, our remote work as parliamentarians and the lives of the people of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Quebec and Canada. How can this government develop apps if it does not respect the public service's ability to develop in-house expertise? We live in a technological world. The government should be focused on developing in-house expertise. What has using outside consultants done for us? What real contribution do these firms make? How do they improve our constituents' lives? Instead of rewarding innovation and praising people for developing new ways of doing things internally, people who know the field and the federal machinery, people who are aware of the realities of their department, their community, and how to meet their needs, the government decides that their opinion is not important and it spends millions and billions of dollars elsewhere to obtain these products, without any oversight, as we now know.

That is not all. To put things in perspective, the spending on GC Strategies accounts for only 0.37% of the total amount of government contracts. If we take what we learned from the Auditor General in this report, what percentage of the \$2.8 billion in additional spending per year was audited? Were the security clearances and contract resources approved? Were the 94% of the contracts that used time sheets audited? What experience and qualifications were required? Is the government paying its contractors without evidence showing that the deliverables were received? It may be time to take a more comprehensive look at external consultants. I would even say that it is time to follow Quebec's example and have a public inquiry.

This is not the only report in which the Governor General revealed things that would have been nice to know before giving a fresh vote of confidence to a government that claims to be new. However, its way of doing business is deeply ingrained.

The housing report in particular talks about inaction. Since time is limited, I would like to talk about indigenous people. There are very significant delays in the registration process for indigenous people. It can take almost two years. Indigenous people cannot get their Indian status verified, which means they are postponing their studies and putting off getting health care. What impact does that have on individuals and communities? That is extremely unfortunate.

I am also thinking of the skyrocketing costs of the F-35A. I think that is how we will ultimately reach 2% for military spending. That sounds a bit cynical, but the way the Liberals have managed things is just as cynical under the circumstances.

● (1125)

In closing, I support this motion, and I want to say that if no work was done, then the money paid by Quebecers must be recovered. Doing nothing is essentially declaring that taxpayers' pockets are an all-you-can-eat buffet. Enough is enough.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member would, at the very least, acknowledge that, through this whole process, we now have a new Prime Minister with a new government. In the 2024 report, there was a series of eight recommendations. Of those eight recommendations, seven have been fulfilled, and the last one is well under way. If we fast-forward to the report that just recently came out, there are no new recommendations.

I am wondering if the member would not agree that we should be, at least in part, recognizing the important role our civil servants play in ensuring there is that sense of fairness and accountability. We have a new Prime Minister who is committed to ensuring more transparency and accountability in the whole process of procurement.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for the member for Winnipeg North, particularly for his ability to listen during speeches. However, I do not feel like he listened to my speech, because I mentioned the points that he raised.

That said, I would invite him to look at what the Auditor General actually did with regard to the recommendations. The member for Winnipeg North is usually able to read between the lines.

Here is what the news release says: "There are no recommendations in this report because I don't believe the government needs more procurement rules. Rather, federal organizations need to make sure that the rules that exist are understood and followed."

In my opinion, this statement reflects a total lack of confidence. The Auditor General is basically saying that the government has been twiddling its thumbs so much lately that she sees no point in making new recommendations until the previous ones have been followed.

That is what it means.

[English]

**Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if my colleague could expand on some of the consulting costs we have seen rising under the government. He rightfully outlined the fact that we have seen a massive increase in the number of public servants and, simultaneously, under the Liberal government, a massive increase in consultants being used.

If we had a budget, I guess it would be in the budget, but from the main estimates, we know that there are more consultants coming to the aid of our public sector. I am wondering if the member could expand upon those earlier remarks.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his interest in accountability.

I want to raise a very important point about government contracting rules. There is a big difference between competitive and non-competitive contracts. The threshold for being on the list was raised to less than \$40,000 from less than \$25,000 before 2019. Under that threshold, the government can tell a firm that the firm can do whatever it wants and no questions will be asked.

How many contracts have gone undetected and unaccounted for? Some very big questions deserve to be raised, especially since we know that \$2.8 billion in government contracts are awarded every year. There must be many firms like GC Strategies. The case of GC Strategies was discovered somewhat by chance, because it was too conspicuous and there had been too much abuse.

We need to add some stringency to the system, but I have very little confidence in this government. Past behaviour is often a good predictor of future behaviour.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member's answer supports my statement.

In 2024, the Auditor General came back with eight recommendations. Those recommendations have been followed up on, and seven of the eight have been fulfilled. The last one is well under way. If we take a look at the recent report she just released, we can see that the member is right: We do not need new rules. We just want to see the current rules that are in place being adhered to. Now we have a new Prime Minister who has made that commitment.

I am wondering if he could provide his thoughts on how—

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, since I enjoy debating with my colleague from Winnipeg North, I will cite another passage from the Auditor General's report.

In report 4, paragraph 4.34 on page 12 states:

We did not issue recommendations in this audit report. We encourage federal organizations to implement the recommendations from recent procurement audits....

This implies that the government has not done so. It has been twiddling its thumbs. It has not followed the recommendations, in-

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cluding those from the Auditor General of Canada's report that was tabled in Parliament, from the report on professional services contracts with GC Strategies Inc., from the first report of the Office of the Comptroller General on procurement governance—

● (1130)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I am sorry to interrupt the member, but we have to move on to the next speaker.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

**Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be here.

[English]

It is such an honour and a pleasure to be here once again on—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Calgary Centre is rising on a point of order.

**Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I think you have to give some consideration to all the things that happen in the House. We are still reeling from the comments from the other side, so we are just getting our thoughts together. I hope you will entertain me while we get a little point of order and get some things happening again in the House. I really appreciate your entertaining my interjection here.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I do thank the member for Calgary Centre for reminding us of the importance of order and maintaining order in this place.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore has the floor.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment and thank, again, the incredible citizens of Calgary Midnapore, who have returned me here for my fourth term. It is an honour to be here to represent them once again.

When our citizens vote for us, when they bring us to the House, they really bring us here with one thing, and that is their trust. They trust that we, when we come to this place, which they have chosen to put us into, will do the right thing, say the right things and take the right actions. With that comes the responsibility of deciding how we will spend their hard-earned money. This is one of the greatest elements of the trust our citizens put in us when we are here.

It is, of course, very unfortunate that the Auditor General has determined, once again, in reviewing GC Strategies, that this was not the case with the government and that the government has once again disappointed the citizens who had placed their trust in it. In fact, the government went beyond disappointing its people. It betrayed the trust of the people who put it here.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Aki-avenhrakh.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

The Liberal government betrayed the trust that was placed in it by its citizens, and not just in one way, but in several ways. This was over 31 departments, nine which had more than 1 million dollars' worth of contracts with GC Strategies.

Let us examine some of the ways this happened. In 33% of the contracts, the government could not show that the contract resources had the experience or qualifications necessary to complete the work. Now, anyone knows that, when applying for a job, the first thing to do is to give a resume, a CV. We would never go to a doctor or dentist who was not certified. We also demand that our tradespeople are certified.

By the way, I have many tradespeople in my riding who cannot find work as a result of the uncertain conditions that have been created by the government. We demand that our tradespeople have certifications, yet for anyone, everyone, who worked for GC Strategies, we cannot necessarily ensure that this was the case. We cannot ensure that they were certified to do the work they did. In 33% of the cases, we could not verify it.

In 58% of the cases, time sheets were poorly documented. Not showing our work is the first lesson that children learn in elementary school. What does that say, when people are not even willing to document and show the work that they did? How can we come to any conclusion other than the work that was paid for was not necessarily completed? Really, there is no other conclusion that we can draw other than this. It is really hard to come to another conclusion.

In addition, 82% of federal organizations could not prove that fees did not exceed market rates. Every Canadian in Canada who is shopping right now is doing price comparisons. I have no doubt about that. I was a public servant for 15 years, and when I had to purchase an item, the first thing I had to do was get three quotes. I was obligated, each and every time, to choose the lowest cost item. However, this did not happen with GC Strategies. This reeks of extortion. It reeks of collusion.

I think of a beautiful young mom in Legacy, one of my communities. When I met her at the door, she was crying because she has two sons with a genetic condition that only allows them to have a keto diet. She had fed them hamburger patties, the stacks of hamburger patties that can be bought in packages of 16 or 32 at Superstore, for four consecutive nights. She had nothing else to feed them.

The Liberal government is overcharging the public and taking advantage of this unique situation, and that is not right.

• (1135)

I went to see my banker two weeks ago. He told me that he is seeing two things he had not seen in his 20 years of banking. The first is that seniors are coming into his office, crying, saying, "I did everything right. I did everything by the book. I followed the rules, I invested my money, and yet I can't feed myself and can't stay in my home." It is heartbreaking. The second thing he is seeing is life-long Canadians cashing out their assets and moving to other countries to have a better standard of living for a lower cost. It is heartbreaking, but these are the things that are happening. I can assure members that these people are price-comparison shopping.

In addition, in 54% of contracts, it could not be proven that deliverables were received. This one blows my mind. Again, as a former public servant, we were obligated to sign. I had a conversation with the Auditor General when she presented her report, sections 32, 33 and 34. Section 33 says the employee must prove that the deliverables were received before they sign the cheque and pay the organization. How was GC Strategies even paid when we cannot prove that the deliverables were received? How is that even possible? It is mind-blowing. The least someone can expect when they pay for something is that they received something.

The Auditor General said that the rules are clear and there are no further policies that need to be made. The Liberal government need only enforce the rules and follow the rules. Yet, the government seems incapable of doing that time and time again. It is incapable of following the rules and enforcing the rules for one of two reasons: It is incompetent, and we have seen incompetence from the government time and time again; or, the second reason, the real reason, I think, it does not care. It does not care about our money, never mind following the rules.

In addition, there is following the rules, and then there is doing what is right. Buying a \$9-million condo in New York City is within the rules, but it is not right. Spending \$100,000 on catering, if one is the Governor General, is within the rules, but it is not right. The Prime Minister says he is following the rules with the Ethics Commissioner, but he is really doing what is right in not disclosing all of his assets?

GC Strategies did not follow the rules, and it did not do what was right. Kristian Firth, if he is listening right now, did something wrong. He stole from the Canadian people. He should never be allowed to have another contract again, and he should return the money to the people of Canada. However, the Liberal government let him do it. It did not see our money, the Canadian people's money, as its money. Canadians put their trust in the government, and it betrayed that trust.

Here is an opportunity for the Liberals and the government to rebuild that trust. They have to get our money back. They have to make it right for the hard-working people who send their taxes to Ottawa. The bad thing has happened, they let that bad thing happen, but this is their chance to make it right. Do the right thing and support this motion; never let GC Strategies have another contract, or its affiliates; and get Canadians' money back.

• (1140)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is even aware of it, but today we have a process in place for when the government or civil servants are able to demonstrate fraud or overbilling. We are already pursuing GC Strategies in court, right now. Is the member aware of that?



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**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, this is what the government does. It provides breadcrumbs of examples of things, trying to indicate to the Canadian people that it is doing right. However, the reality is that GC Strategies is only banned for seven years; it is not banned for a lifetime. It can create another entity to win a contract with the Canadian people. This minuscule piece of good is simply tiny and incomparable to the wrong that was done. So much more has to be done.

The Auditor General says the government is not even following the rules; it is not enforcing the rules. It must begin to do this. Little examples like this are not satisfactory.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech.

What does my colleague think are the chances that we will ever see that money again?

The other point that I would like to go back to is the penalty imposed on GC Strategies. It has been banned from all public contracts for seven years. This seems like a slap on the wrist. They are being told not to do it again because what they did was not nice. Does my colleague not think that Mr. Firth and Mr. Anthony should have been banned for life, so that they will never again be able to work using public funds? Does she not think that this punishment would have fitted the crime?

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that seven years is not enough. We need to ban these two men and, of course, GC Strategies from ever receiving Government of Canada contracts through other companies. I completely agree with my colleague.

[English]

**Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her very impassioned speech. I really loved the end of her speech, because she talked about doing what is right. I am a big believer in asking, "When nobody was looking, did you do the right thing?" We certainly know the right thing was not done. I know that folks back in Essex, in the Windsor region, have almost become accustomed to the government having not done the right thing.

My question for my colleague is this: Would the member agree with me that GC Strategies should not only pay back the money but also pay back the interest on that money?

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague as he makes his return to the House.

Yes, GC Strategies should pay the interest as well, as Canadians are required to do on their taxes, for example.

The member touches on something far more important, which is doing the right thing. How can the government, or even Canadians, have faith in a Prime Minister who is not committed to doing the right thing, when he has indicated that he will not go beyond the requirements of the Ethics Commissioner? Doing the right thing starts at the top. Right now, Canadians do not have that leadership from the Prime Minister.

• (1145)

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, does my colleague agree that the money must be recovered, regardless of whether the government in power is Liberal, Conservative or another party, and regardless of who is the leader of the party in power? This money does not belong to us; it belongs to all Quebecers and all Canadians.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a unique issue and very different from the other motions that we have seen in the House over the last few days. Yes, of course, if Quebecers paid, then they deserve some of the money that went to GC Strategies.

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is now my turn to thank the voters in my riding, the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, who did me the honour of putting their trust in me almost two months ago. I had the opportunity to rise in the House and now I have the time to thank them directly for their confidence. I hope I live up to their expectations.

The people in Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk and across Canada want the money they pay in taxes to be managed responsibly, carefully and efficiently. Unfortunately, to say the least, today's debate shows the ugly side of how this government that has been here for nearly 10 years has managed public funds irresponsibly.

Let us not forget the sad memory of the ArriveCAN scandal. That much-talked-about scandal that we nicknamed "arrive scam", proved to be an absolute ridiculous mismanagement of public funds. It was supposed to cost \$80,000 and ended up costing \$60 million. It was demonstrated that it could have been done for far less money, much more efficiently and with much better results. Who was behind such irresponsible management of public funds? It was GC Strategies. That sad company, run by incompetent people using a completely irresponsible approach, is at the heart of another dreadful scandal. The Auditor General specifically investigated what GC Strategies has done with the Canadian government over the past 10 years, and it just happens to coincide with the Liberal government's first election up until a few months ago. The Auditor General found that this company was awarded 106 contracts directly related to 31 federal government organizations managed by the then Liberal government. As I said, this occurred from 2015 to 2024, for a total of \$65 million.

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That is a lot of money. I would invite those who are watching at home to think about the income tax return they filed recently, the taxes they paid to the federal government and the GST they pay out of pocket every time they buy something. A total of \$65 million of that money was given to GC Strategies for zero results. For all 106 contracts and 31 organizations, the Auditor General examined virtually every aspect of the sound management of public funds and found that there was very little evidence to justify spending this money. There was very little evidence of any work being done for the \$65 million that Canadians gave to this company. Very little was done to check the credentials of those who were awarded the contracts. Proper security measures were not taken. Doing work for the federal government of a G7 country requires security measures, and yet, everywhere we look, we see that security protocols were not followed, particularly in some specific organizations. Time sheets, which are used to record the hours worked and calculate the pay of a person who is supposed to be doing a job, were not managed responsibly. I am not the one saying it, the Auditor General is. Furthermore, it is impossible to clearly demonstrate that the calls for tenders for these GC Strategies contracts were conducted according to the rules. In addition, 80% of the fees paid were above the market average for similar work. Obviously, there were also absenteeism issues that were poorly managed. Remember that the government hired 100,000 new public servants over a 10-year period. Despite this, the government was unable to properly track absenteeism.

This is a scathing report from the Auditor General, which proves beyond any reasonable doubt that third-party companies must follow the rules when it comes to the sound management of public funds, and that, in this case, the rules were not followed when it came to the work that was done, qualifications, security clearances, time sheets, the tendering process, generous fees and worker absenteeism. Everything was wrong. Everything was poorly done.

• (1150)

Let us also remember that this government promised to cap new spending at 2%. A few hours after the King's statement and the Speech from the Throne, in the first budget item that the government tabled, we learned that the Liberals were increasing spending on consultants from \$19 billion to \$26 billion. That is a 36% increase. This is exactly what we are talking about.

Over the past 10 years, 31 agencies were directly targeted. However, government agencies are not just left to their own devices. Somebody somewhere is responsible for them. They are called ministers. We are talking about ministerial responsibility and accountability. Four ministers were directly involved in this mismanagement: the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, the current Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, the current Minister of Indigenous Services and Marco Mendicino, who is currently serving as the Prime Minister's chief of staff. That is no small matter. Four major players in the current government were ministers responsible for the mismanagement of \$65 million in 31 Government of Canada agencies while the Liberals were in office.

The government did not take them to task for that. The Prime Minister actually promoted them. These are not small departments they are in charge of: foreign affairs, U.S. trade, indigenous services and the Prime Minister's chief of staff. One would be hard

pressed to find something bigger than that. I will get to the Department of Finance later, if I have time. That is another story.

That is why we are asking for the money to be paid back. The Auditor General of Canada was extraordinarily critical in her report. I went over the issues she raised. This is how she put it in her report and in her answers to questions from the media. She said, "We found problems with almost every contract we looked at, which tells me there is no reason to believe it is limited to these two." That is a big deal. Everything she found was highly problematic. She said that, if everything she looked at was all wrong, she had no proof that the same thing was not happening elsewhere. The \$65-million problem we are dealing with right now might be indicative of even bigger problems elsewhere. That is what the Auditor General of Canada said.

Now, that is really incredible. She says that we need to go back to basics, that the policy should simply be properly applied and followed. That is incredible.

A while ago, I heard my colleague from Winnipeg North, who never misses an opportunity to defend the indefensible, say that it was incredible and asked whether members were aware that the Liberals had taken action and had managed to do it without spending any money. That is precisely the problem. All Canadians ask of their government is that it take proper care of taxpayer money and follow the rules. That is not too much to ask. They are just asking that the rules be read and followed. The government receives taxpayer money and has to manage it properly.

For 10 years, however, the government has behaved in a totally irresponsible manner. Now they want us to believe that everything is okay because this is a new government. Yes, it is a new government, but the four ministers responsible are playing key roles in this government. It bears repeating, because there are serious consequences to that. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Prime Minister's current chief of staff are four major players in this government. They call that a new government.

Canadians will not be fooled by this government's mismanagement. Canadians deserve to be reimbursed because the work that was done was botched. The rules were not followed. We are not the ones saying so. This is according to the Auditor General of Canada. If by chance those folks over there have any sense of honour after winning the popular vote, they should reimburse Canadians.

• (1155)

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, when it comes to recovering the funds, it is important to recognize that where we have been able to demonstrate fraud and overbilling, we are, in fact, currently pursuing GC Strategies in court. That is actually taking place.

I am wondering if the member would also provide his thoughts on this. In the last report, which we just received, there are no new recommendations. In the report prior, there were eight recommendations. Seven are implemented and one is well under way. Could the member provide his thoughts on both?

**Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, this is a simple rule that we want to address: just apply the rules. That was the main recommendation of the Auditor General, which is something she should not have to say, because it is a part of the job that we have when we are a government, to apply the rules.

The Liberals did not apply the rules, during not one month, not one year, not five years, but 10 years. All the time they were in office, they did not apply the rule on that. Those who are responsible are the cabinet ministers, and the cabinet ministers who were there during this mess are still around. The chief of staff of the Prime Minister, the external affairs minister, the minister responsible for international commerce with the United States, and the first nations services minister, three cabinet ministers and the chief of staff of the Prime Minister are still there. Shame on you.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Please address comments through the Chair.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

**Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, whom I used to watch on TV but am now seeing in person right in front of me, the Conservatives' lack of genuine willingness to act is blatant and obvious.

Do the Conservatives really want to help our seniors? They raised the age of eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67. The Liberal government reversed that. My colleague talks about respect and dignity for our seniors, but his party will not commit to anything.

Will the Conservatives finally support our government's concrete measures to help our seniors?

**Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and congratulate him on his election. I acknowledge that he saw me on television and is now seeing me in person. That is great; that is democracy.

I would like to remind the member that we voted in favour of the tax cuts that were made, because they were largely in keeping with what we would have done. We would have liked to have done more, but we could not.

With regard to the retirement age, my colleague should know that in 2019, 2021 and 2025, our position was always clear: We are

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keeping it at 65. I would encourage my colleague to refresh the memories of those on his side of the House.

Meanwhile, since he can meet with the chief of staff, the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, he should tell them directly that they really made a mess of handling the GC Strategies scandal.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I agree in part with what my colleague said, although I am deeply concerned about one thing.

GC Strategies used to be called Coredal. This company had over \$7 million in government contracts between 2011 and 2015. Who was in power at the time? It was Stephen Harper's Conservative Party. Furthermore, who was in the Department of Transport? It was Pierre Poilievre, the current leader of the Conservative Party. He was parliamentary secretary to the then minister of transport. Coredal was awarded contracts worth over \$1 million.

Can my colleague explain to me why there was no concern at that time about a company that would go on to become GC Strategies?

• (1200)

**Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his re-election. If I remember correctly, this is his third term.

Let us not forget that GC Strategies really showed how pathetic it was with ArriveCAN. The cost of the app went from \$80,000 to \$60 million. That is when we realized that these people were utterly incompetent. When we looked into the last 10 years, we realized that \$65 million had been mismanaged. That is why we are asking for our money back.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will just take a bit of liberty here, if I may, to address another issue, and then I will get back to the topic at hand.

The heart of Canada's Filipino heritage community will be found in Winnipeg North, and today is a very special day as we recognize Philippine independence. In fact, there is a flag-raising ceremony that will be taking place very shortly on the lawn of Parliament Hill. The Filipino heritage community contributes in every way to all our communities throughout Canada, in every aspect of our society. I just wanted to give that extra plug, especially with the month of June being Filipino Heritage Month.

That is the positive aspect of what I would like to say. I want to try to encapsulate why we are here today debating this particular issue and talk a bit about the motivation and some disappointment. I was rather enjoying the debate we were having yesterday on Bill C-4. We will have a vote on it later this afternoon, after question period.

I wanted to question the motivation, primarily because, over the years, I have seen that the Conservative Party tends to be more focused on the very negative aspects of politics, in terms of things like character assassination or throwing the word "scandal" or "corruption" on anything, and other things of that nature.

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It is interesting that we have an opposition day, and the Conservatives have a choice. Good for them for picking whatever it is they want to pick. They picked an Auditor General's report that, in essence, had no new recommendations, other than that it references that we currently have rules in place. I will talk about that in depth. This is an opposition day where there is going to be a vote at the end of the day.

We can contrast that to yesterday, when Conservatives started being critical of the government because the tax decrease we were giving was, from their perspective, not large enough. That is something they started to comment on toward the end of the debate. I would have thought that that would have been a far better motion of public policy, given that we just came out of an election. The Conservatives would have had the opportunity to present their arguments as to how much of a tax break it should have been and why. We do not know what they will do on Bill C-4, but it will come up later today. I hope they vote in favour of it, but they definitely implied that they would have amendments to bring to the bill.

I say that because the opposition has four days of debate, four days on which they can designate the topic. Why would the Conservatives take this particular report from the Auditor General? I suspect it is because they want to go back to their old ways. The newly elected Prime Minister, on April 28, with a new government, has established mandate letters that are exceptionally clear, so that all Canadians can see where the government's priorities are.

Today, because of the motion we are debating, I would suggest to Canadians that the Conservatives continue to be focused on anything that has any whiff whatsoever of any form of potential scandal or corruption, and then they try to tie it to the new administration. We see that in their remarks already today where they try to deny that there is a new administration.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** No, seriously, let us think about this.

• (1205)

Mr. Speaker, let me give members some food to chew on here with the history of GC Strategies. Mr. Firth is the gentleman the Conservative Party called to the bar. After calling him to the bar, it was like a courtroom inside here, and they declared him guilty. There are some people in the Conservative ranks who would have liked to see him go to jail right away. I remember one member said there used to be a jail in Centre Block. So much for any sort of due process.

That is the Conservatives' priority. Pierre Poilievre made it very clear. Canadians might be concerned about Trump, tariffs and trade, but not Pierre Poilievre. He is concerned with trying to make the Prime Minister look bad while the Prime Minister is out and about and meeting with first ministers, and very successfully, I might add. He has addressed the issue the Conservatives brought up today. There is a new Prime Minister, a new agenda and a new administration that are moving forward, and they are stuck in the past.

The opposition day motion talks about wanting to get money back. I would like to think there is not one member of Parliament in this House or in previous administrations who would want taxpayer

dollars to be abused in any fashion. I was glad to convey to members that there is a process that needs to be followed. When it comes to the recovery of funds, where we can demonstrate fraud or overbilling, we pursue it. We are already pursuing GC Strategies, in particular, in court. That is happening. One would not think that, but that is the reality of the situation.

We can combine that with the Auditor's General's report. What does that report say? We agree with the Auditor General when she states that we do not need more rules. We need to ensure that the rules and framework in place are followed by public servants.

Let us go back to the former administration. When this was brought to its attention, what did the minister at the time do? It was to order an internal investigation. Did the former administration ever say no to the Auditor General? Not at all. We supported the recommendations that were brought forward by the Auditor General. The 2024 report had eight recommendations in it, and seven of them have already been implemented. The last one is well under way. That was under the former administration. We are not talking about the current administration, which is different. I see members are already praying on the other side.

I appreciate that we have a Prime Minister who has an incredible history. I like to highlight that as the former governor of the Bank of Canada, the former governor of the Bank of England and an economist, not only does he understand the situation Canada is in today with the United States, but he has made a commitment to building the strongest economy in the G7. That is where his focus is, contrary to Pierre Poilievre's focus.

The voters were correct on April 28. Who knows were Mr. Poilievre's mind would be today if he were sitting in the Prime Minister's chair? Canadians saw through that. That is why we received 8.5 million votes. No prime minister or political party has received more votes than the current Prime Minister did in the last election. However, members opposite want to change the channel. They do not want to talk about what was being debated in the election; rather, they want to talk about GC Strategies and Mr. Firth. Let us talk a little more about GC Strategies, then.

• (1210)

There is a company called Coredal, and in that particular company, members will be surprised to know, two individuals were directors, Mr. Firth being one of them. I noted earlier that Mr. Firth, under that company, actually received contracts under Stephen Harper. Members will not believe this: Pierre Poilievre was actually sitting at the table too. He was sitting around caucus when contracts were being given out to Mr. Firth. There is no reference to that, of course, in the Conservatives' motion.

**An hon. member:** It's not in the AG report.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is all about GC Strategies. When I raised that point, one of the members of the Conservative Party said that Mr. Firth was not a part of GC Strategies at the time. Members might be surprised to know that GC Strategies also received contributions.

**An hon. member:** That is not true.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, GC Strategies was in place in 2015. I will remind my colleague opposite that Stephen Harper was the prime minister for most of 2015. I think it is worth the member looking at it again before he makes that claim from across the way.

What we see with GC Strategies is that the number of contracts did increase. Let us put it in the perspective of time. When it was getting these massive contracts, the world was going through a worldwide pandemic. Governments around the world were spending billions and billions of dollars. Canada was not alone, and yes, GC Strategies did receive many contracts for a great deal of tax dollars. I do not question that, but trying to give false impressions is what the Conservatives are very good at.

At the end of the day, what we will find is that when it was brought to the minister in a tangible way, a minister from the former administration actually took action.

**An hon. member:** Was it ours?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** “Was it ours?” is a good heckle, Mr. Speaker, referring to Stephen Harper. The contracts during the pandemic were under Justin Trudeau, just for clarification for the member opposite. Harper's were well prior to the pandemic, but the point is that countries around the world were investing, and standing behind and trying to protect their citizenry with all sorts of measures, including border controls.

I can remember hearing under the former administration, sitting over here, the Conservatives saying we needed to do more for the CBSA and watch individuals who were coming into Canada. They said we were not doing enough and that we were late on it. They sure dropped that a couple of years after that point.

The political idea behind ArriveCAN was to protect the health and general well-being of the people in Canada. That was the original objective behind it. We have an incredible civil service. I would ultimately argue it is second to no other civil service in the world. In fact, we will find that other countries often look to Canada's civil service, as it is as close to being independent of politicians as one can get compared to any other country in the world, and it does fine work.

I am not going to draw any conclusions in terms of ultimate behaviour, but I suspect, just as in any other working environment, that at times we might get some bad apples. There might have been some things that were overlooked, and it became very clear that this did take place. That is something we all take very seriously.

• (1215)

There are procurements, and contracts are issued out. Tell me about a government in Canada, whether federal, provincial, the current administration, which is very new, the previous administration or the Harper administration, that did not have contracts and procurements. If people want to talk about a real scandal, I would recommend they take a look at the CSEC scandal. That was a real scandal under the Harper regime. Members can do a Google search to find it. The bottom line is that if people want to look at a political scandal, they should look at the Harper and Pierre Poilievre scandal

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that took place shortly after they were put in government. Trust me, I have a lot of information on that scandal, which involved hundreds of millions of dollars. Google it. People will find it. It is an interesting read.

What we are talking about here is billions of dollars being spent during a pandemic. Whether it was the former administration or the current Prime Minister's administration, we want accountability for every tax dollar out there. I believe the Prime Minister understands the importance of transparency and accountability, and I believe that Canadians respect that fact because of the type of work he was doing prior to becoming an elected politician. I am grateful that he did make the decision to run, because I believe he is the right person at the right time in Canada's history to bring Canada together and build one strong Canadian economy. That is what I believe we should be debating, actually. After all, that is what was talked about at the doors.

I will look to my colleagues and ask them this: When they were knocking at the door, did anyone bring up ArriveCAN? I can honestly say that not one person out of the approximately 100,000 people I currently represent today brought up the issue of ArriveCAN when I was knocking on thousands of doors. The most common issues brought up at the door were, in fact, Donald Trump, tariffs, trade and genuine concern about the economy. That was the number one issue, and that is what the Prime Minister is dealing with today.

While the Prime Minister is dealing with that issue, we have before us Pierre Poilievre's idea of what Canadians are most concerned about: a report that was brought forward by the Auditor General. Two things really stood out, in my mind, and I will reference one: We do not need more rules; we need to ensure that the rules and framework in place are followed by public servants. There are two aspects of that statement. One is that we do not need more rules. The second is that we need to ensure they are being followed by public servants. I believe that the sense of professionalism within our civil service agrees with that statement.

There is no doubt that the Prime Minister's Office and the civil servants dealing with procurement processes have been made fully aware of the report, and I do not think there is any disagreement. I am pretty sure there is not. In fact, we have a Prime Minister who has even taken action to expand the role of the minister who is going to be charged with these responsibilities. We are anticipating that there will be significant procurements. After all, we just heard the major announcement that military expenditures are going up, to 2%.

I believe I am running out of time. I do not know if the opposition would give me leave to continue on. I do have a few more thoughts. Otherwise, I—

• (1220)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** We are out of time, regrettably.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk.

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**Gaétan Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot. The ArriveCAN failure went from \$80,000 to \$60 million. Would the member say it was a failure? Was there a failure in the system?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the political idea of protecting Canadians' health and well-being during a worldwide pandemic was a good idea.

Unfortunately, when billions of dollars were spent, some things did not go the way I would have chosen them to go under the previous administration. However, I honestly do believe we are on the right track to making sure we have a more effective system so Canadians will be satisfied.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I noted something interesting in the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North. He said that he never once heard his constituents talk to him about GC Strategies during the election campaign. I understand that because, throughout the election campaign, the Liberals lulled everyone to sleep with fear of Donald Trump and tariffs. They fed that fear so well that there was no room to talk about anything else. There was no longer any room or interest in raising the many ways this outgoing government had proved to be incompetent.

This honeymoon, this sort of bubble that the Liberals have thrust Canadians and Quebecers into, is still going strong. That is why we are doing this work today, to bring back to the fore the scandals that are unacceptable and attributable to the mismanagement of this government, which is the same government as before. There is no denying it. Their leader may have changed, but they are still the same Liberal government.

Does my colleague think that the measures the government has put in place could provide a framework for the management of public contracts? Does he seriously think that we are going to buy the idea that these measures are enough to make us feel comfortable and secure with how public funds are managed?

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there are many things I would like to say, but let me read something verbatim about this so maybe the person will have a better appreciation. This is with respect to strengthening the requirements for the procurement of professional services, which take effect almost immediately, on July 1. Measure 1 is entitled "Value Cap on Task-Based Informatics Professional Services and Task and Solutions Professional Services—Task contracts". Another measure is "Duration Cap on Task-Based Informatics Professional Services and Task and Solutions Professional Services—Task Contracts". The third measure is entitled "Amendment Cap on Task-Based Informatics Professional Services and Task and Solutions Professional Services—Task Contracts".

The point is that there are many different actions that the newly elected Prime Minister, with the administration, has already taken on the file, even given the government's focus on and goal of building one strong Canadian economy, the strongest in the G7. We can do other things too.

[Translation]

**Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite his speech about how this is a new government and a new face for the Liberals, the member for Winnipeg North has once again shown us through his repeated and often very frequent interventions that these are the same old Liberals with the same old scandals and the same old tendencies.

Why is the member for Winnipeg North unable to commit to saying that his government will reimburse Quebec and Canadian taxpayers for the GC Strategies scandal?

• (1225)

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I have already addressed that particular question, but I want to pick up on the idea of the new government, new Prime Minister and new administration. If we take a look at the reality of what is happening today in Canadian society and reflect on the political leadership in the chamber today, there is only one new leader, and that is the Prime Minister of Canada, and that is a new administration.

Members of the New Democrats and the Conservatives might not like that fact, but I like to think that, at the end of the day, it is a different administration. All one needs to do is look at the priorities and focus of the Prime Minister compared to those of the previous administration or Stephen Harper's administration. The New Democrats and the Conservatives might not like it, but that is the reality.

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, I enjoy fiction storytelling time in the House whenever the member for Winnipeg North gets up. It is quite remarkable what lengths the Liberals are going to in trying to distance themselves from their past, the corruption and the tired old Liberal government. The member just has to take a look at today's proceedings to see how many times he has actually stood up and claimed it is brand new, compared, perhaps, to any new members.

Earlier, one of the parliamentary secretaries made a statement that from now on they were going to follow the rules and were going to act with integrity. I gave him a chance to correct the issue. Could the member opposite inform us why, just now, after 10 years of the tired, corrupt government, the Liberals are vowing to act with integrity and offering to follow the rules on procurement?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I could actually draw attention to more so-called corruption and scandal-type issues with a direct link to Pierre Poilievre than the member can to the current Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister was just elected, for the very first time, on April 28. We can contrast that to the career politician Pierre Poilievre and a huge number of scandals. If I am provided leave, I could list at least 20-plus scandals under the Stephen Harper regime or administration, in which Pierre Poilievre was not only Harper's parliamentary secretary but also sat around the cabinet table. He was there from the very beginning of all the corruption back then.

Does the member want to compare newness? Pierre Poilievre is not new when it comes to politics and the House of Commons.

**Gaétan Malette:** Mr. Speaker, I asked a question previously on the ArriveCAN file, which went from \$80,000 to \$60 million. I got answers. We ended up in the billions of dollars. I would like to go back to that. How did we go from \$80,000 to \$60 million? What went wrong? If the government is going to correct it, it must be able to tell us what went wrong.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the current Prime Minister's focus is on ensuring that we have more accountability and transparency, and he has taken actions to be able to demonstrate that in terms of procurement.

One of the things I would emphasize is that over the coming years, we are going to see a lot more money spent on procurements because of the commitment to build a stronger, healthier Canadian forces. We have made the commitment to 2%. The Prime Minister is very keen on moving forward, and we have confidence in the civil service to ensure that justice is done in regard to GC Strategies.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first say that I appreciate the member's recognizing—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like there is a little bit of excitement from the other side. It was actually the member who finally did admit today that when it came to the situation with WE Charity, not a single taxpayer dollar was consumed and that, actually, all the money was here. Today the Conservatives are talking about how they stopped it.

First of all, I want to thank the member for recognizing that the Filipino flag was raised today. I thank him for his work. There is a very active Filipino community in Waterloo.

I have a question, and I would like to hear an answer. The Conservatives refuse to recognize that it is a new administration. The fact is that the election just happened on April 28. What I am—

• (1230)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I do need to give time to the parliamentary secretary to respond.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that on April 28, we elected, for the very first time to the House of Commons, the member of Parliament who is now Canada's Prime Minister, and our Prime Minister is, in fact, committed to ensuring that we build a stronger and healthier economy. Ultimately his goal is to achieve having the strongest economy in the G7. That is where the Prime Minister and the new administration's efforts are going to be. I am very proud of that fact.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to state at the outset that it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the great residents of Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations. I also want to telegraph that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix.

Today we are debating our Conservative motion that, given that the Auditor General found that the ArriveCAN contractor, GC Strategies, was paid \$64 million and that in many cases there is no proof that any work was completed, the House calls on the government to, one, get taxpayers their money back within 100 days of the

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adoption of this motion; and two, impose a lifetime contracting ban on GC Strategies, on its subsidiaries, more importantly on its founders and principal partners, Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, and on any other entities with which those individuals are affiliated.

The simple message is that Canadians want their taxpayer money back. I know that the member for Winnipeg North claims that no one in his riding spoke about ArriveCAN, but I am sure they talked about accountability, transparency and proper prudence in terms of the government's exercising prudence over taxpayer money. He will not talk about that, but that is exactly what the motion is about.

If this is a déjà vu moment, and it feels like a déjà vu moment for me, it is because approximately 15 months ago I stood before your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, who was in the chair, and I gave a speech on a similar motion. It was not worded in the same fashion, but the intent was there to give the government 100 days to inform the House as to what steps it would take to get taxpayers their money back.

That was a result of the Auditor General's releasing a number of damning reports. It is important to note at this point that the Liberal government, the same so-called new government with the same old players who are now saying, through the Prime Minister, that they totally accept the findings of the Auditor General, was the one that opposed the Auditor General's looking into the ArriveCAN scandal, what we call the arrive scam scandal, right from the earliest opportunity.

The messaging is very clear in this. The ongoing Liberal arrive scam saga continues. It is the bad Liberal gift that just keeps on giving. Currently, the Auditor General has released a scathing audit on the top arrive scam contractor, GC Strategies. The two-person, basement-dwelling company, not a brick-and-mortar one, now under RCMP investigation for fraud, received a jaw-dropping \$64 million from the Liberals since they took office.

This was not the first time, as I indicated, that the Auditor General had released a report on GC Strategies. The app was designed to cost Canadians \$80,000; that is what the same old Liberal government parroted in the House on numerous occasions. In her first report, the Auditor General made it clear that the cost estimate was well beyond \$80,000, and in fact was approaching \$60 million, but she could not be accurate. Why is that? It is because the paperwork and the shoddy accounting practices of the CBSA were such that she could not examine all pertinent documents.

The Liberals defended the cost of the app in the House numerous times, and quite proudly, but now erroneously have stated that it saved thousands of lives. The truth remains that it was an app that was poorly designed, notwithstanding its price tag, that always broke down and that created countless misery and heartache for Canadians. I would dare say that not one Canadian was saved by the Liberal bureaucratic and administrative boondoggle.

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● (1235)

The government's very limited defence involves the plea that the app was developed in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, that time was of the essence. We heard that numerous times. However, the unique circumstances and demands of the moment scarcely offer a fig leaf to cover what the Auditor General laid bare in that report.

Karen Hogan said, "Overall, this audit shows a glaring disregard for basic management and contracting practices throughout Arrive-CAN's development and implementation." She further said, "I don't believe that an emergency is a reason that all the rules are thrown out the window." She proudly concluded that the government paid way too much for that particular app.

The issue is such that the Liberal government has a responsibility, has the legal ability and, according to a government department official responsible for contracting and outsourcing, has the power to get taxpayers their money back. The official testified before a committee that when the government is frauded, they "have the ability to recover the funds from the suppliers, and it's in [their] regular practice to do so."

This should telegraph to all of my Liberal colleagues that they should stand in support of this ability to ensure taxpayers get their money back. I have since looked at a number of news articles, notwithstanding the member for Winnipeg North's comments that no one is talking about it. Certainly, ripped from the headlines are a number of interesting stories.

First, by Lorrie Goldstein, the heading is, "Ignoring contracting rules costs taxpayers billions: auditor general". The article reads:

Federal auditor general Karen Hogan on Tuesday reported widespread incompetence in the awarding of government contracts by the public service, resulting in billions of dollars of taxpayers' money being wasted.

What's even more alarming is that everyone in the system knows it and no one is doing anything about it.

Given that, what is the point of having an auditor general if every time she exposes incompetence and waste, the government pays lip service to implementing her recommendations and then goes back to doing the same things that led to the issue being investigated by the auditor general in the first place?

In her latest report, this concern arises from Hogan's deep dive into federal contracts awarded to...GCStrategies.... That was supposed to cost \$80,000.

I could literally speak for an hour on this. I have been involved in it for literally three years.

The article continues with some of the key findings:

- in 58% of the contracts examined that were awarded without tendering, federal departments failed to assess whether doing so would have resulted in lower costs to taxpayers.

- in more than 80% of the contracts examined that were awarded without competition or with only one valid bid, government departments failed to verify that the fees paid did not exceed market rates.

- in almost 50% of the contracts examined, federal departments couldn't show the work was delivered, even though payments were made.

- in 33% of the contracts examined, federal departments couldn't show the firms contracted were capable of completing the work.

- in 21% of the contracts examined, federal departments lacked documentation showing...security clearances for contractors working on government networks containing sensitive information.

Alarming, those department agencies where security clearances were not obtained included National Defence, Global Affairs and the Department of Justice, three of the most important ministries that have an obligation to secure sensitive data.

In essence, the Auditor General concluded that, ultimately, no recommendations were being made, because they need to follow the basic rules, which have been allowed to be not followed for literally the last 10 years, and that, simply, Canadians did not receive value for their money. In essence, I am asking every member to rise, to stand up for their constituents and ensure accountability is here.

● (1240)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am one who oftentimes provides a lot of commentary from this little corner here, but I did appreciate the member's talking through and bringing to light some of the details that should be shared. I would say that constituents in the riding of Waterloo would want to hear them as well. I do hear the concerns and the comments that were raised in the report. I appreciate that this new government has committed to following all the recommendations.

The member made a comment in regard to how, oftentimes, a comment is made, yet there is not enough follow-through. That issue really did bring to light a bit more attention, because we have a new Minister of Government Transformation.

I hear the two points that people want raised the most. With the member's experience and his background in law, as we are spending more on defence and as we are building one economy in Canada, what advice and guidance can we hear from him so that we can ensure the success—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to give time to the member to respond.

The member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that very thoughtful question from the member for Waterloo. I do not think she is going to like the answer, and I am not going to take credit for this answer. I am actually going to give credit to a journalist from the National Post who reported today on an interesting story about all the items that I spoke to, but the heading, to answer my friend's question, is this: "Job one for Canada in this scary new world is to stop being stupid".

The answer is to stop being stupid and follow the damn rules. It is simple. It is common sense.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the member for Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, I would remind our members to be careful of their language during the debate.

The hon. member.



**Rob Morrison (Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the people in Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies are expecting that this money will be recovered. Obviously, everybody in this House will be voting for this motion. Would you not agree?

What do you propose would happen if some people, perhaps on the other side, do not vote in favour of this motion and do not want to recover the money that has been taken?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Always, questions are to go through the Chair.

The floor recognizes the member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question.

As I indicated in my speech, one would only hope that there would be unanimous approval for this motion, if all of us live true to our responsibilities to our constituents, which are to ensure that we are delivering value to them.

This has been clearly demonstrated over the last 10 years. GC Strategies is but one contractor, 0.37% of all the money that was spent on outside consultants, which was \$64 million. According to Ms. Hogan, it would be naive for us to think that this is only applicable to this one contractor. We are talking about literally billions of dollars.

With that being said, every member should stand for their constituents and ensure transparency and accountability and a plan to pay the money back.

**Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard a number of people on the other side today talk about how it is the “same old government”. That is not, in fact, the case. This government was judged in the court of public opinion, and we got more seats. I would say it is the same old opposition. The Conservatives lost their leader as the choice of the Canadian public.

What are you doing differently to earn the confidence of the general public of this country?

• (1245)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well I am here, and I will let the member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations explain what he is doing.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the members from the same old Liberal government, he may be a new face, but he has inherited a corrupt, rotten-at-its-core government with the same values and same beliefs.

What I am doing differently is that, unlike this member, I stand up for my constituents and I make sure they get value for their tax dollars.

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is going on here? We have a 10-year-old government that is neck deep in corruption. It is another week and another Auditor General report denouncing the actions of the government, a government that really wants to profess to be new. It is a new government, but not new people. It is the same people, but

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they have changed. They have found religion. They are going to do things differently from now on, this same group of people.

As this motion demonstrates, the Liberals have an opportunity to demonstrate the genuineness of their conversion. We have made it easy for them today. We have put forward a motion they can vote for that will show they are in fact different from the way they were before. This is their opportunity. How helpful we are, as a Conservative opposition, to give them an opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of their apparent conversion by voting in favour of this motion.

I will give a bit of background for those who are just joining us. Today we are debating a motion from the Conservative Party opposition that calls on the government to demand the return of money that was improperly taken by GC Strategies. GC Strategies is a two-person company that received tens of millions of taxpayer dollars. What it does is something called staff augmentation. If I had known about this, I might have gone into that business instead of going into politics, because it is a really good deal.

Here is how it works: A person is hired to do a job, and they hire someone else to do that job but pay them less than the person received in the first place. Let us say I am hired to paint someone's fence, and I am paid \$100 to do that. I then hire the member for Waterloo to paint the fence, and I give her \$50 of that \$100. The person who hired me had their fence painted for \$100, and the other member has earned—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Waterloo is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that there is no confusion. I do not want to paint the member's fence.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

I will let the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan continue.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, this is a hypothetical, and a ridiculous hypothetical, but ridiculous hypotheticals are required to demonstrate what has actually gone on in government procurement. For example, someone hires me for \$100 to paint the fence. I hire someone else for \$50 to paint the fence. I collect \$50 for doing, you guessed it, nothing. If this happens over and over again to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, we get kind of a sense of the procurement system that has been operating under the government.

We are talking about GC Strategies today, but it is important for members and people at home to understand that there are hundreds of companies that do staff augmentation work in the IT space alone. We had these two guys working out of their basement, and they had a great business model. They got contracts, then hired someone else to do the work, and they collected a massive fee in the middle. It is not only Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony from GC Strategies who are doing this work; there are hundreds of companies doing staff augmentation for the federal government in IT alone. This is a profoundly broken system.

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First, the government makes procurement so complicated, so unwieldy, that almost nobody can understand it, and then we have people who position themselves as experts in nothing except getting contracts. In other words, they are people who have the relationships, they have the access, they know how to host the right whisky tastings for the right people, which is a real thing that happened. They know how to host the right whisky tastings, and so they know how to get government contracts. Once they get the government contracts, they go on LinkedIn and find the people who actually know how to do this work, and then they hire them.

Mr. Speaker, it is like something out of *Yes Minister*, but it would be rejected by that show for being too unrealistic. This is what actually happens and has happened for the last 10 years under the Liberal government. However, now the government has changed and will never do it again. The Liberals have a new government, with the same people who have nonetheless seen the errors of their ways.

When all else fails in this debate, members across the way say, “Well, yeah, but didn't we win an election? We won an election after all.” Nobody is disputing the results of the election, but I do think it is notable that in order to win the last election, the Liberals had to pretend to be something very different from what they had been for the last 10 years. Their only argument in the election was to say, “Well, Canadians want change, and we've changed too. We'll be nothing like ourselves.” They promised to be nothing like themselves, and that turned out to be a reasonably successful political strategy. However, I think very soon Canadians will discover that the Liberals are actually not nothing like themselves, that they are actually more like themselves than they pretended to be, and that we will see the continuation of these same absurdist procurement policies, things that if presented as the possible script for a television show would be rejected for being unrealistic.

We have people getting hired to hire other people, with a procurement system that is so broken and so complicated that only well-connected insider brokers can understand it. Those well-connected insider brokers receive the contracts, hire the people and collect a massive premium for doing so. This week, the Auditor General came out with a report, having looked in detail into what happened with this one particularly notorious company, GC Strategies, and found there was massive abuse.

One highlight from the committee exchanges we had with the owners of GC Strategies is that they admitted to presenting fraudulent resumés to the Government of Canada in order to get work. It is the old resumé padding that we all tell our children not to do; this is how GC Strategies was getting contracts. They explained what their normal process was. They would get a resumé that may not be compliant with the requirements of the bid, and then they adjusted the resumé to make it compliant.

Let us say the contract required that a person had five years' experience at something, but the person they were proposing to do the work actually only had five months' experience. They would change the months to years to make it compliant and then go back to the original resource, the person who would do the work, and say, “Is this okay with you? We changed the numbers here.” In one case, they forgot to consult the resource before they changed those

numbers, and that is where they got caught out, because the resource called them out for it.

• (1250)

Before the committee, Kristian Firth admitted that it was a standard part of their process to adjust people's resumés to make them line up with the expectations of a contract and then check in to see if it was okay. Again, if this was a pitch for a *Yes Minister* episode, it would be rejected for being unrealistic. However, this is par for the course in the broken procurement system of the Liberals.

To cover for this, the Liberals cycle through different procurement ministers. The same people are cycled around. “Oh, it is a new minister. It is a new minister.” Almost every six months on procurement, it has been a new minister who is not responsible for anything that was previously done. Meanwhile, the previous minister goes on to remain in some influential role in the government. It is a farce and a tragedy, and Canadian taxpayers are getting abused as a result of it.

The Liberals profess to be a new government; they have changed. As I said, today is their opportunity. We have put forward a motion that says GC Strategies should be banned from ever getting government contracts and they should pay the money back. It is not that difficult; if companies abuse contracting rules, falsify resumés and do not actually do the work, then they should pay back the money they took from taxpayers.

If our friends across the way have truly changed, they should vote for this motion. It would be a great demonstration, not just if they vote for it, but if they actually follow through on it. We have had instances where they vote for motions and then do not follow through on them. This is their opportunity to vote for a motion and then act on it. We have been asking them today, are they prepared to vote in favour of this motion?

The Liberals are trying to fill this debate with a great fog of nonsense and distraction. I welcome the member for Winnipeg North and am looking forward to receiving that gust of fog. My question for them is, will they support our motion to pay the money back? If they are the new Liberal Party, then I think they would vote for this motion to order the money back. If they are voting against this motion, then it will demonstrate, of course, that they are the same old Liberals, unchanged as they have always been.

• (1255)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member wanted to hear from one of my dear colleagues, and hopefully there will be enough time.

I listened to the member's comments, and I hear what he is saying. I really do appreciate the fact that he recognizes that Canadians made a decision on April 28 and that he accepts the decision they made. What is interesting to me is that we do have a new government; there is a new government transformation, new processes in place and a desire to do better, to ensure that we have one Canadian economy and that we are fighting for Canadians.

What I hear from the member is really a professional opposition member with 10 years' experience. I doubt he has had any other job that he has done for 10 years.

I would like to hear from the member. How can we as the government, and all members elected to this place, work together to ensure that we are delivering results for more Canadians, rather than just the same old spiel from the Conservatives?

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear such a sharp question from my colleague, because I thought I was very generous in my speech in giving the government this opportunity to vote in favour of our motion. This opposition motion is a gift to the government. We are inviting them to come along with us and vote in favour of getting this money back from GC Strategies. I think this is the kind of offer of collaboration that people are looking for. I would challenge the government; it is supposed to be new.

Here is the point: I suspect the Liberals will vote against this motion in the end, but I would challenge them to do the right thing. The member wants to know how we can work together. Vote in favour of this motion. That is how we can work together. That is what we need.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very serious question for my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I am trying to understand.

His party was supposedly contacted by a whistle-blower named Luc Sabourin, who appeared before the committee to explain that he had seen serious irregularities at the Canada Border Services Agency. He mentioned that he had contacted the Conservative Party of Canada, but that nothing had happened, there was no follow up. It took the Conservative Party of Canada years to start asking questions and to bring this forward in committee.

I would like my colleague to simply explain to me why it took years for them to take action to denounce this serious scandal.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I can say that we did a lot of work with whistle-blowers on this file. I am sorry that I do not remember the individual that the member mentioned, but I can say that we worked really hard with the other opposition parties.

We worked really hard to try to force the government to answer these questions. It was clear that the government was going to take its time answering them, but the opposition parties had to take action to bring about change.

[English]

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we heard in committee repeatedly from the deputy minister of PSPC that the government is aware of many cases of fraud like GC Strategies, but it is negotiating with the contractors to receive the money back for taxpayers, not demanding it back but negotiating. We heard from a parliamentary secretary today who said that despite the government banning GC Strategies from bidding on business because of the known corruption and the fraud, it will not seek the money until it gets a legal opinion.

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Could my colleague weigh in on why the government is fighting Parliament and common sense on getting the money back for Canadians?

● (1300)

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, this question underlines the problem with the Liberals in regard to whose side they are really on. We can compare the way they treat elite insiders who have abused the rules and taken money from taxpayers versus what would happen to everyday Canadians who might have a dispute with CRA, for example, about what is owed. The gentleness with which the government approaches elite insider contractors, even those who have flagrantly broken the rules, versus how ordinary Canadians are treated, shows that, in fact, the Liberals are persistently on the side of their elite insider friends.

**Emma Harrison Hill (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Trois-Rivières.

This is a great opportunity to introduce myself. I have heard a lot about the old government. I am new here. Members will have a great opportunity to meet me later. I believe my colleague next to me is the new member for Carleton, a Liberal who won the riding after 20 years.

The Government of Canada accepts the findings of the latest Auditor General of Canada's report related to the procurement of professional services. We take this report, and all subsequent recommendations, seriously and remain fully committed to fairness, openness and transparency in federal procurement practices. Simply put, we are committed to protecting the integrity of procurement.

While that commitment remains, our new government will do things differently. Elected with a mandate to deliver change, we will take a new approach to governing, one that includes a laser focus on fiscal discipline. We are well aware of the past issues around the procurement of professional services, in particular, those that were uncovered through previous audits and investigations. Again, in this most recent report. The Auditor General has been clear that the right procurement rules are in place, but federal organizations have not consistently followed procurement policies when awarding and managing contracts. This, we wholeheartedly agree, is unacceptable.

While the Auditor General did not make any new recommendations for the government, the report reinforces the previously identified issues in procurement practices, underlining the importance of clearly understanding and correctly applying existing policies. I can say that the government has already acted on past recommendations and continues to take strong steps in improving oversight and the management of federal procurement.

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Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are working closely with government departments and agencies to address the gaps identified in previous audits. This includes improving data collection, increasing transparency in procurement decisions, clarifying roles and responsibilities and strengthening oversight and accountability in procurement activities. We are making these changes to strengthen the federal procurement process, improve the way the government does business with suppliers and achieve the best value for Canadian taxpayers.

The findings of this report are very much in line with previous reports from the Auditor General relating to similar matters. Previous reports provided the government with important recommendations to improve the oversight and integrity of federal procurement, particularly in professional services. We are taking these lessons, and I assure everyone that we are working hard to apply them.

Over the past year, PSPC has taken concrete actions to strengthen oversight on all professional services contracts falling under its authority. In collaboration with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the department has acted swiftly to implement several measures, including improving evaluation requirements to ensure resources are appropriately qualified for the job, requiring suppliers to be more transparent about the prices and subcontractors they use, improving our own documentation when awarding contracts and authorizing tasks, and better specifying and documenting what needs to be done, as well as which projects and tasks contractors are working on.

By streamlining and simplifying our mandatory procurement mechanisms, we are transforming and modernizing how the government procures professional services. This includes reducing risk in our buying processes, improving how we manage contracts and doing more to promote solution-based procurement approaches that would ensure we are always getting the best value for Canadians. The Auditor General had no additional recommendations for the government regarding this file, but asked that we continue to implement the measures we have introduced to respond to previous recommendations. We will ensure that happens. We will actively engage with client departments and agencies to ensure these new measures are implemented quickly and efficiently.

We are also taking strong action to ensure that we do not do business with suppliers of concern. Earlier this month, the office of supplier integrity and compliance deemed GC Strategies as ineligible from entering into contracts or real property agreements with the Government of Canada for seven years. PSPC had previously suspended the security status of GC Strategies in March 2024, which precluded it from participating in federal procurements with security requirements. PSPC had also suspended GC Strategies from all professional services, contracts and contract vehicles administered by the department. When it comes to recovering funds in cases where we identified fraudulent behaviour or overbilling, I can assure the House, as my colleague has mentioned, that we are pursuing GC Strategies in court.

• (1305)

As I noted earlier, we remain committed to protecting the integrity of procurement and to expecting public servants and departments

to operate with the highest standards of integrity when procuring professional services to support their program delivery.

Our government will continue to strengthen procurement practices when needed. We know that our work is not finished and that there will be more to be done. We take to heart the Auditor General's advisement to continue applying recommendations made in previous audits. That is exactly what we are doing.

Again, I want to thank the Auditor General and her team for undertaking this review and for their findings and previous recommendations. This report affirms that we have the right policies and rules in place, but they need to be well understood and applied properly. We are thankful for the Auditor General's work, which will help us as we continue to review our processes and find ways to strengthen the integrity of government procurement.

I wanted to note something very important. There were numerous reports, as well as scrutiny, on this matter in the last Parliament, but bad actors are being held to account. It is now time for the Conservatives to stop playing games and get down to the business of governing. Canadians elected our new government to move forward on a bold agenda, such as tackling crime, securing the border and making life more affordable.

Let us put the games behind us to focus on what Canadians sent us here to do.

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is funny. Every time I hear someone from the new Liberal government say that they are going to be ethical in the future, that they are going to do things right in the future and that they are not going to be corrupt in the future, it seems very clear that it is an admission that the last 10 years were nothing but ineptness, incompetence and corruption. It is very clear.

The hon. member said that they are going ahead with trying to recover the money from GC Strategies through the courts. One of her colleagues earlier stated that they were not at that point because they were waiting for a legal opinion. At the same time, the deputy minister of PSPC says that they have the ability to recover the funds from suppliers any time they wish.

Of the three, which is the truth?

**Emma Harrison Hill:** Mr. Speaker, decisions around suspending contractors must be made independently and free of political interference. That is why we have set up the office of supplier integrity and compliance. Currently, PSPC is in court to recoup money from GC Strategies for work that was not completed. We will never tolerate fraudulent behaviour and unethical behaviour.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Peterborough for her speech. It is mind-boggling to hear the Liberals claiming that they are a new government with a new vision and a new management approach. All of a sudden, they see the merit of properly managing public funds.

Let us consider, for example, the CBSA assessment and revenue management system, or CARM, the Phoenix pay system and the long-gun registry, or we can go back even further to the sponsorship scandal.

In each of those situations, the Liberals said that they truly acknowledged the situation, that they would do better and that they would be more rigorous, but there is no evidence to show that such is the case. Even the Auditor General said in her report that she would not be adding any further recommendations because the government has been unable to implement the ones it has already received.

Let us be serious. What does the member think are the chances that the government will be able to recover even one penny of the amounts it paid to GC Strategies?

[English]

**Emma Harrison Hill:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has accepted all of the recommendations previously made by the Auditor General. In her most recent report, she made no new recommendations but urged the government to continue to implement previous recommendations, which has happened. These measures are meant to strengthen the integrity of the procurement system, including improving data collection, increasing transparency in procurement decisions, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and strengthening oversight and accountability in procurement activities.

• (1310)

**Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about some initiatives that are being put in place to ensure greater accountability and greater transparency in terms of the spending of taxpayers' money. I would like to ask her to elaborate a little more on that.

**Emma Harrison Hill:** Mr. Speaker, Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are working closely with government departments and agencies to address the gaps identified in previous audits.

This includes improving data collection, increasing transparency in procurement decisions, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and strengthening oversight and accountability in procurement activities, just to name a few.

[Translation]

**Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech. However, what I do not understand is the Liberals' old habit of hiding behind lawyers and procedures instead of making a firm political commitment to stand up for taxpayers who have been wronged and robbed of their money.

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Why is the member unable to stand up today and clearly tell Canadians and Quebeckers that the government will do everything it can to recover the money they lost because of GC Strategies?

[English]

**Emma Harrison Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians made a clear decision, and they asked for a clear mandate for this new government to do just that, to stand here, stand up for them and unite us as a country in this incredibly difficult time. That is what we are going to do.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in light of the mixed messaging on efforts to recoup the money from GC Strategies, the member for Peterborough indicated that PSPC has taken GC Strategies to court.

Will the member or her government table the statement of claim in the House today?

**Emma Harrison Hill:** Mr. Speaker, again, I feel like I am being a broken record here, repeating the same things we have seen for the last several hours. As a new member, it is honestly surprising that this is the way things are carried out. I do believe Canadians are expecting more from us besides this back-and-forth tit-for-tat.

[Translation]

**Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today, just a few hours before we will vote to implement measures to make life more affordable for Quebeckers and Canadians.

The people of Trois-Rivières, along with people in the ridings of all my colleagues on both sides of the House, will be watching carefully to see what we do today. These measures will help put more money in Canadians' pockets. We hope that our opposition colleagues will vote with us.

As we said all morning, the Government of Canada accepts the findings of the Auditor General of Canada's latest report on the procurement of professional services. We take this report and all subsequent recommendations seriously. We remain fully committed to the fairness, openness and transparency in federal procurement practices. Simply put, we are committed to protecting the integrity of procurement.

In the last Parliament, parliamentarians, the Auditor General, multiple parliamentary committees and others undertook extensive work to examine and hold to account those who were found to have acted inappropriately. With new safeguards in place and serious action being taken to hold GC Strategies accountable, it is time to turn the page on the political games of the last Parliament. Let me be clear. Our new government believes that misconduct of any kind is unacceptable.

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This is, in fact, a new government, with a new direction, a new leader and almost 40% new MPs. It received a strong mandate for change from Canadians. We will take a new approach to governing, one that includes a laser focus on fiscal discipline. We will also modernize procurement processes.

We are well aware of the issues around the procurement of professional services, in particular, that were uncovered through previous audits and investigations and again in the latest report.

The Auditor General made it clear that the right procurement rules are in place, but that federal organizations did not consistently follow procurement policies when awarding and managing contracts. We wholeheartedly agree that this is unacceptable.

It is important to note that the Auditor General did not make any new recommendations to the government. However, the report reinforces the previously identified issues in procurement practices, underlining the importance of clearly understanding and correctly applying existing policies. I can say that the government has already acted on past recommendations and continues to take strong steps in improving oversight and the management of federal procurement.

Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are working closely with government departments and agencies to address the gaps identified in previous audits. This includes improving data collection, increasing transparency in procurement decisions, clarifying roles and responsibilities and strengthening oversight and accountability in procurement activities. We are making these changes to strengthen the federal procurement process, improve the way the government does business with suppliers and achieve the best value for Canadian taxpayers.

The findings of this report are very much in line with previous reports from the Auditor General relating to similar matters. Previous reports provided the government with important recommendations to improve the oversight and integrity of federal procurement, particularly in professional services. We are taking these lessons, and I can assure the House that we are working hard to apply them.

Over the past year, PSPC has taken concrete actions to strengthen oversight on all professional services contracts falling under its authority. In collaboration with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the department has acted swiftly to implement several measures, including improving evaluation requirements to ensure resources are appropriately qualified for the job, requiring suppliers to be more transparent about the prices and subcontractors they use, improving our own documentation when awarding contracts and authorizing tasks, and better specifying and documenting what needs to be done, as well as which projects and tasks contractors are working on.

● (1315)

This includes reducing risk in our buying processes, improving how we manage contracts and doing more to promote solution-based procurement approaches that would ensure we are always getting the best value for Canadians. The Auditor General had no additional recommendations for the government regarding this file.

The changes we have made predate the Auditor General's last report. In November 2023, following the revelation of the improper contract negotiations with GC Strategies, PSPC wrote to the government departments and agencies to inform them that it would be replacing all master-level user arrangements with client departments, agencies and Crown corporations. These arrangements set out conditions for access to select professional services methods of supply maintained by PSPC. As part of this process, PSPC and client departments have established new arrangements, which stipulate the use of new contract provisions to increase costing and subcontractor transparency. These new arrangements were circulated to the departments on January 31, 2024, and they are now in force. A more recent measure that just came into effect this month is the implementation of part 18 of the Budget Implementation Act, 2005. This gives the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement exclusive authority over federal procurement.

That is not the end. On the contrary, departments and agencies will continue to exercise the authority to conduct their own procurement. However, the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement can now revoke a department or agency's delegation if there is reason to believe that procurement rules are not being followed. More broadly, as circumstances dictate, the minister can mandate standard procurement processes across all federal departments and agencies.

Once again, I want to thank the Auditor General and her team for undertaking this review and for their findings and previous recommendations. This report affirms that we have the right policies and rules in place, but they need to be well understood and applied properly. In her report, the Auditor General found that federal procurement policies promote fairness, transparency and value for Canadians when they are followed. That is what the Auditor General said. The important thing is not to create more rules and red tape, but to ensure that all departments and agencies follow the rules that are in place. We will use evidence-based approaches to improve processes and ensure that the existing procurement rules are followed and properly documented each and every time.

Finally, let me be clear: This new government expects public servants and departments to operate with the highest standards and to always be mindful of optimizing the use of public resources for Canadians. We will learn from these reports and audits, and we will not hesitate to take bold, decisive action to ensure the best value for Canadian taxpayers in all government contracts.

• (1320)

[English]

**Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have professional experience as a chief information officer in managing multi-million dollar projects globally for large corporations and government agencies. This scathing report by the Auditor General illustrates the lack of governance of the Liberal government, from procurement to change management to the validation of deliverables and time sheets.

Where was the due diligence by the Liberal government? Where was the minister overseeing this portfolio? A good governance process requires supervision, checks and balances and scrutiny throughout the project. All of these basic governance processes were missing by the Liberal government. We are looking for fellow members to approve this motion and give the money back to Canadians.

[Translation]

**Caroline Desrochers:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want us to move forward. They want this Parliament to get to work and deliver on our commitments. They made that very clear on April 28. That is what Canadians expect.

As we have said repeatedly, we are grateful to the Auditor General for her report and the recommendations it contains. Legal action is also being taken against GC Strategies. We are doing everything in our power to see this matter through to the end.

**Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has accepted all of the Auditor General's previous recommendations. However, our opposition colleagues are telling us the opposite.

Did the Auditor General make any other recommendations in her last report?

**Caroline Desrochers:** Mr. Speaker, in her last report, the Auditor General noted that we had the right processes in place to ensure transparency and accountability in procurement processes. She did not make any additional recommendations for those processes beyond the recommendations that were made in 2024 and that we have already implemented.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing from the member for Trois-Rivières today is pretty mind-blowing.

She seems to think that a new election is like a reset button. Imagine a driver ramming their car into a lamppost. Even if we replace the driver, the car is still the same, unless my colleague is saying the opposite.

We are talking about 106 contracts between 2015 and 2023, most of them non-competitive. So much for fiscal restraint. After a new election, we are supposed to forget all that. It is swept under the rug

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and we are told it will never happen again. For more than half the contracts, representing \$74 million, the government did not even check whether it received the deliverable before paying the bill.

I have some news for my colleague from Alfred-Pellan: The Auditor General did not make any recommendations because the government was not even capable of following the ones that had been made in previous reports.

Is a new election like a reset button? Is that what my colleague is saying?

• (1325)

**Caroline Desrochers:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on April 28, Canadians made it clear they want change. They are not just looking for a new direction. They elected this government. The change they want to see is all of us working together to make progress on the real issues.

We are at a crossroads, a critical time for the Canadian economy, for economic health, for workers, for Canadians and Quebeckers. People expect us to work on those things together, hand in hand.

We are implementing the recommendations the Auditor General made in 2024. We are getting to the bottom of this matter. We are taking GC Strategies to court. We are doing everything we can to resolve this issue.

[English]

**John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time rising in this place for a speech on a particular subject, I would like to thank the people of Barrie South—Innisfil for electing me for a fourth term. I take their support with great humility and responsibility as well. I certainly appreciate the support.

I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley.

It is almost as if we were watching the movie *Men in Black* with Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones. There were times when they had a pen-like device; they would actually press a button, and it would flash a white light. Everybody who saw that light forgot what had gone on in the past. It is almost as if the Liberal Party were using that light to make everybody, not just in this place but across the country, forget what has gone on in the past.

As we relate to the GC Strategies situation today, a lot has gone on in the past. Words that end in “bility” seem to have been lost in this place, such as “responsibility”, accepting responsibility. “Accountability” is another word that has been lost in this place. Certainly ability has been lost in this place as well as among the Liberal government.

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In the private sector, the people responsible for the situation would be fired. They would be publicly shamed and never hired within industry again. That is how egregious the GC Strategies situation has become. Again, the Liberals have avoided all accountability and all responsibility for actions by labelling themselves as a new government, when in reality, not only are the ministers responsible for the failure still around, but many of them have been promoted into different positions.

During the campaign, I would go around talking to people. We would talk about the Liberals and the history of the last 10 years. I would say to them that even if new wax is put on a car, it is still a 10-year-old car. That is where the Liberal government was. It still has dents and engine problems. It has lots of problems, and a new wax was not going to change anything. The government is not a new government. We can shift people around. We can change titles and pretend that it is not the same Liberal government that has been driving our country into the ground over the last 10 years, but it is.

This would not be tolerated in the private sector, so why are we tolerating it in this place? All we are asking is for the government to take accountability, support the motion to claw back the fraudulent spending and ensure that Canadians, hard-working taxpayers, are able to get their money back. Is that a hard ask? It is not, especially in a situation as egregious as this.

Let us go back and look at what happened with GC Strategies, which is, again, reaffirmed in the Auditor General's report from the other day. I happened to be in the lock-up. I listened to the Auditor General. Having gone through all of this in the previous Parliament, I was shocked once again by just how deep the rot goes and how systemic a problem this is within the current government. There are no signs that it is going to change.

In 82% of the contracts that were received, the government failed to verify that the fees paid did not exceed market rates. This deliberately allowed room for the government to overpay for contracts and waste taxpayer dollars. The government chose, 82% of the time, not to verify whether it was overpaying. It was overpaying on these contracts yet still awarded GC Strategies \$92.7 million in contracts, with \$64.5 million being paid out, and yet there is nothing to show for it. There is nothing to show for the corruption or the fraud that occurred.

The project was supposed to cost only \$80,000, and yet it ballooned to \$64.5 million, 80,000% over budget. Even the Auditor General says that she does not know what the true cost would be because she does not have access to certain record-keeping, etc. This is also not considering the cost to investigate, spend time, and have taxpayer dollars investigate it and uncover the depth of the scam instead of working to improve this country.

• (1330)

I think of the thing that really bothered me. As the most recent chair of the ethics committee, where we were studying foreign interference, the impact it was having on our country and the fact that many parts of our institutions and some political parties as well had been infiltrated by foreign interference, there were a lot of things that disturbed me. The security lapses that occurred were probably one of the things that really disturbed me throughout the whole saga.

A sample of the contracts, and this was reaffirmed again the other day by the Auditor General, showed that 33 out of the 35 contracts required security clearance, with 50% of those contracts not able to show that all contract resources, including the subcontractors, had the appropriate security clearance prior to collecting the award. Obviously, we have heard about the implications of foreign interference and the fact that there are regimes that are trying to infiltrate and are successfully infiltrating our institutions, such as Parliament and other areas.

The government could not even guarantee that the security clearances were not having an impact on what was going on, and in knowing the damaging facts and the evidence that would come in light of the Auditor General's report, the Liberals were quick to issue a seven-year ban on government contracts to GC Strategies. It was not lost on me and should not be lost on members that this seven-year ban happened on the Friday before the Auditor General's scathing report came out on Tuesday morning.

Whether that speaks to the government's having a heads-up and trying to get ahead of the story is certainly in question, but the ban was not issued out of the goodness of its heart but rather to over-compensate for its prior lack of accountability, responsibility, variability and traceability in their work on and with GC Strategies. There are those words with "bility" again.

Why not, and this is a fair question, issue a lifetime ban on the company? Why not issue a specific ban on Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony to ensure that the people involved do not reincorporate under a different name and continue with their grift on the government? They can, in effect, change the name, start another company, and even after these seven years, or perhaps within it, they can come back to the government and start issuing contracts again.

This sets a tone. Obviously, the GC Strategies scandal has set the standard and tolerance for this kind of behaviour, signalling that the government can be taken advantage of and exploited at the expense of the taxpayer. It has completely undermined Canadians' ability to place their trust in their own government, old government or new government, and the government certainly needs to make an example out of GC strategies, signalling a new message that this level of fraud and incompetence will not be tolerated.

My concern going forward, quite frankly, and I spoke about this in August 2022, is what we just saw with the main estimates, where we are seeing \$26 billion in additional increases for contractor costs. My concern is that the kleptocracy is going to continue within the current government. If someone is a friend, a family member or a lobbyist who is connected with the government, they are going to benefit to a great degree, and without mechanisms of accountability and transparency, and our ability to provide oversight as an official opposition and as all opposition members in this place, it is going to be awfully difficult for us to keep track not only of where the \$26 billion is going to go but also what has happened in the past, the history of the past.



As we have seen with GC Strategies, the government has shown itself not to be transparent and not to be accountable at times when it needs to be. This is not a new government; this is an old government with new wax on the car.

● (1335)

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the only one trying to use the *Men in Black* flashlight to make people forget everything that happened is Pierre Poilievre, who wants everyone to forget the fact that he had a 25-point lead in the polls and then completely blew an election only a month and a half ago.

I would think that the member, and Conservatives generally speaking, would have a new approach when they come into the House, but when the member gets up to speak, he is just using the exact same material he was using a year ago, two years ago and three years ago, which ultimately led to his sitting almost in the exact same seat that he left in December.

My question for the member is this: Would he not think that perhaps now is a time to reset the strategy on the Conservative benches to a strategy that might be more productive in terms of how the Conservatives conduct themselves in the House?

**John Brassard:** Mr. Speaker, it is really rich when a member of the old government, purporting to be the new government, stands up and does not accept responsibility or accountability for what went on in the past.

The Liberals want us to forget about the past. They want us to forget about all the corruption, all the cronyism and all the kleptocracy that went on, where government insiders and well-connected friends and families benefited as a result of the Liberals' being in power, while the people they governed suffered. They continue to suffer.

People need the money back. They want the money back. There has to be accountability in the government, and that is what we are asking for with the motion.

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today's debate is an odd one. We hear the government that was in power before the previous government calling it out for things that the new government claims are not its fault, because the Liberal Party of Canada has changed leaders. The whole thing is Kafkaesque. I cannot wrap my head around it.

Personally, it does not bother me if the government is Conservative, Liberal, red, blue, orange, green, yellow or whatever colour it wants to be. All we want is for the government and those who currently hold the reins of power to get back the money that was taken from us by GC Strategies. Can it do that? Is my colleague willing to acknowledge that we need to get that money back?

**John Brassard:** Mr. Speaker, I already said that in my speech. The government is the same. Nothing has changed but the leader. It is like the example I gave of an old car: Even with a coat of wax, an old car is still an old car.

If the government is truly willing to change, it will vote in support of this motion.

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[English]

It would not vote for covering up all of its indiscretions in the past. This is a systemic problem within the government that needs to be exposed. We are exposing it. The money needs to be paid back, and it needs to be paid back now.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about how this particular scandal would be dealt with in the private sector. We know that in 2015, Justin Trudeau promised Canadians that he would be open by default and that if the Liberals made a mistake, they would own up to it and apologize.

Can my colleague identify any particular minister or deputy minister who has accepted responsibility for the boondoggle?

● (1340)

**John Brassard:** Mr. Speaker, not one has accepted responsibility for what went on with GC Strategies. Not one minister has accepted any of the responsibility for all the scandals, all of the corruption and all of the cronyism that has gone on over the last 10 years. In fact, as I said in my speech, several have been promoted into new positions. It is unacceptable that Canadians would accept this. Canadians did accept it, and I understand some of the reasons they did.

This is important to understand: Much of this stuff was happening long before Donald Trump became the President of the United States, and it will continue under the current government. We are going to see, as I said earlier, that the kleptocracy continues, where well-connected insiders, cronies, friends and families are going to benefit as a result of the government's continuing on. There is \$26 billion in consultants in the main estimates. Where do people think the money is going to go? It is going to keeping the kleptocracy alive, and it has got to stop.

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the great people of not just southwest Saskatchewan but also west central Saskatchewan. With the redistribution of the ridings for the past federal election, I have taken on some significant area to the north of what the old riding used to be. It is an honour to be able to represent people from that new area. I want to thank my constituents for trusting me to be their representative here in the House for a third time.

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While I was on the campaign trail, I was door knocking in the town of Biggar. “New York is big, but this is Biggar” is a saying in that town. It is a great community. I knocked on this one door, and a mom answered. She was a single mom with a couple of young kids, and she was working as an EA in the local school there. As the conversation went on, she talked about how unaffordable life has become, about the struggles of a single mom and the plight she was in with her former partner not doing a good job of making his spousal and child support payments, as well as the lack of enforcement around that. The reason that matters is that while we have this story about this young lady in Biggar and the struggles she is going through in life, on the other hand, we need to look at what has been happening with the government, which is the same as the last government and not the new government it says it is.

Look at the track record of so many ministers. We can look at the scandals, the waste and what has gone on over the last 10 years. What happened with GC Strategies is just another glaring example of the type of cronyism, the type of fraud, that has really been committed against the taxpayer. This young mom, in the situation she is in, sees this and wonders, “What on earth is going on? I can’t even get ahead.”

In the Auditor General report here, it says that not only did Kristian Firth get all this money that he should not have been getting; he also got to help write some of the contracts. He got to help write some of the conditions for the deals. There was a \$25-million deal that he helped write, and then he got the deal, and of course it was heavily slanted in favour of GC Strategies. What a shocker. We see that, and then we hear about the plight of this young lady.

I know that all of us on the campaign trail would have heard similar stories from people who are struggling with the cost of living, people who are struggling after 10 years of bad Liberal policy, and what that has done to them and their communities and their ability to afford housing, to afford groceries, to afford a vehicle, to get out of high school, to get out of college, to get out of university and enter the workforce, and how those opportunities are not there, thanks to Liberal mismanagement of basically everything. After the last campaign, those are the kinds of stories that people elected us here to be able to tell.

The Auditor General's report and the issues it talks about are the reason why we have a motion today calling on the government to make sure that GC Strategies repays the money, that that money is recovered. I just want to highlight a couple of other things from the Auditor General's report. Right at the very beginning, it reads:

Federal organizations are required to monitor the work performed by contractors. However, we noted that federal organizations frequently disregarded government policies in this area. This included not having records showing which contracted resources performed the work, what work was completed, and whether the people doing the work had the required experience and qualifications. In addition, in 82% of examined non-competitive contracts and competitive contracts that received only 1 valid bid, federal organizations failed to verify that the fees paid did not exceed market rates.

On top of that, let us take a look at some of the notes in the report as well. Underneath the rubric of “Federal organizations did not follow procurement policies when awarding contracts”, it reads, “Procurement methods were not consistently justified”, “Security requirements were not enforced”, “There were weaknesses in contract monitoring”, “Information on suppliers' performance and rates

was not collected and shared”, “Support for contract prices frequently lacked justification” and “Federal organizations made payments without evidence showing that all deliverables were received”.

● (1345)

Most people at home are probably wondering what on earth GC Strategies did. Well, it did basically nothing, except to take a lot of money for the ArriveCAN app. For a lot of people, if we tell them about the ArriveCAN app, it instantly triggers a reaction. It brings them back to a time of government overreach: people being forced into quarantine who should not have been, people not being allowed to leave or enter Canada and all kinds of issues like that. That is what people remember about ArriveCAN. GC Strategies is the company that was awarded a big contract. It was supposed to only cost about \$80,000 for this app but ended up costing over \$64 million. We do not even know the total cost of it, because the Auditor General could not get access to all of the information on it. That is what we are dealing with here today with our opposition day motion. We are demanding that the government get that money back.

I also want to bring people back to when we called Kristian Firth to the bar here. He was admonished by this House. However, there was a very telling element to that. One of the last questions that was asked of Mr. Firth before he was done was whether he felt any shame. His answer was that he did not. Then he just hopped up and walked out, and that was the end of it. He felt no shame. He took all this money, robbed the taxpayer and away he went.

I read out some of the things in the Auditor General report: the support for contract pricing, the lack of justification, that federal organizations had made payments without showing deliverables, the weaknesses in contract monitoring and the security requirements not being enforced. Why does that matter? There are a lot of reasons why that matters, but what it goes to is government responsibility.

Are ministers following up with their departments? Do they even know what their departments are doing? What this shows is a complete lack of leadership in the government among its ministers. What happened to those ministers? Most of them were re-elected and put back into cabinet. In a lot of cases, they were promoted to even higher portfolios, with more responsibility. They failed upwards. That is what was given to them by the Prime Minister. One would have thought that after Justin Trudeau stepped down as prime minister, and the supposed new government came in with a new leader, there would be some changes in the front bench of the Liberal government over there. There have not been.

They are the people who are ultimately responsible for this, because the buck stops with the ministers. The ministers need to know what is happening in their file and their department. There is no ministerial responsibility left, thanks to 10 years of the Liberal government. GC Strategies is just one of many examples of why people are so sick and tired of the government corruption coming from there.

I want to take us back to 2019, when I was first elected. One of the first subjects I stood up in this House to speak on was the Joe Peschisolido report; he was another former Liberal who was in breach of ethics. We also had the SNC-Lavalin scandal. We are all pretty familiar with what happened under that situation. Then we had the green slush fund, which seized this place up for a number of months prior to the election, talking about Liberal scandal again, and so many other scandals woven in between all of that.

We have new members from the government standing up to give their first speeches today. What are they giving their first speeches on? They are speaking on our motion on Liberal government scandal. It must be a little demoralizing over there, knowing they have to get up and talk about the scandals, the waste, the corruption and the fraud that has gone on and has permeated throughout the government for 10 years. That is what their first speech will be about.

As an opposition member, when I was first elected in 2019, to me it was no wonder we were talking about Liberal corruption and scandal. It was no shock, watching how Justin Trudeau ran this country. Therefore, when we look at the motion here today, it would seem that the very least the government could do is demand that the money that was stolen from Canadian taxpayers by GC Strategies, under false pretenses, be recouped and repaid. I hope the government takes it seriously. We have been hearing Liberals say, "Oh, we're going to take them to court," but then, "Well, maybe we're not taking it to court." We do not know what is actually going to happen there.

The government needs to take this seriously. I hope this motion passes and that we see the taxpayers made whole, not just for the amount but maybe even for the interest that has accrued. Canadian taxpayers need to be made whole. I hope the government takes that seriously.

• (1350)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, people following this debate are getting a clear indication of priorities and focus. We have Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party. We should keep in mind that the election was on April 28. What are the Conservatives talking about? They talk about issues related to the last administration. No one was talking about that during the election. We have the Prime Minister, who continues to push the whole idea of building a stronger, healthier economy. That is—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Many members are suggesting words the parliamentary secretary should use. The member has spoken many words; I am sure he can find them. I will let him finish his question and comment.

### *Business of Supply*

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see that there is a new Prime Minister and new administration, and the Conservatives are stuck in the past with previous administrations. They ask how new it is. An interesting fact is that the current Prime Minister has served in the House of Commons for 45 days, and Pierre Poilievre served for 7,609 days. Which one does the member think is newer to the House of Commons?

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the track record of the new Prime Minister. He spent four years advising Justin Trudeau. Is it possible, maybe, that the Prime Minister was advising behind the scenes on GC Strategies? Was he advising behind the scenes? We do not know because he will not file all of his disclosures. He may have been tied in with the Ethics Commissioner prior to becoming Prime Minister.

When we look at how new the Prime Minister is, the Liberals say he has only been on the job for 45 days. No, he has been here. He openly admitted he started advising Justin Trudeau back in 2020, so he is not new. He has been around the block for a long time.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are being treated to quite a show in today's debate.

The Liberals are throwing mud at the Conservatives, saying that the Harper government also awarded contracts to GC Strategies. The Conservatives respond by saying that that is not true and that the current situation between the Liberal Party and GC Strategies is worse.

Something rather historic happened yesterday. Every new minority government brings new coalitions. Yesterday, we witnessed the formation of a Liberal-Conservative coalition, which I now refer to as the "anti-Quebec alliance". The Conservatives are fine with Quebecers being cheated out of \$814 million, and yet today, they are up in arms about the GC Strategies scandal.

I have just one question for my colleague. Why is it acceptable when it is Quebecers who are being swindled?

[English]

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, after the election was over, and even when we were at the doors during the campaign, people were very clear. They said that if the Conservatives formed government, they wanted to get answers on the Liberal scandals and see some accountability for the green slush fund, SNC-Lavalin, GC Strategies, the list goes on and on. Now that Conservatives are in opposition, they want us to keep pushing the government on these things.

As the opposition, we are going to continue to demand accountability for the things the government did in the past, because it is not a new government, and also the things it is going to do in the future. The best indicator of the future is the past. When we look at the Liberal government, we know exactly how this is going to go.

*Statements by Members*

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members like to stand up and say it is a new government, it is a new day and it is a new Prime Minister, and that we should be looking forward, not backwards. If it is a new day, and a new man with a plan who has no ties to GC Strategies, why does he not just ask for the money back?

• (1355)

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that great question. It should be really simple for the Prime Minister to say he was not part of that and demand the money back. It should be really easy for him to do that if he is as new and as clean as Liberals say he is. However, because he has been behind the scenes for four or five years, I think it puts him in a tough spot to be the one to demand the money.

That is why the opposition is holding the government accountable with motions like this, demanding the money be recovered on behalf of the taxpayer. What happened was ridiculous, it was criminal, and people want to see accountability not just for Kristian Firth but for the government.

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is not my first rodeo, so to speak, in this place, so it is great to have this slot with all the members here. I know my Conservative colleagues in particular enjoy when I get up for debate. They will be champing at the bit to ask questions afterward. I am not our hon. colleague from Winnipeg North, so they have a fresh opportunity to engage with this side, although we do love our hon. colleague from Winnipeg North.

It is a pleasure to join this opposition day debate. Any member who knows me in this House knows that I enjoy the opportunity to litigate the text of motions and the ideas that the opposition puts forward in this place, and I intend to do that this afternoon, even if it is after question period and Statements by Members. I have had the opportunity to review the principal elements of this motion, and I look forward to speaking to those points and to some ancillary points that will be important for all members to think about in the days ahead regarding the way this government is advancing its agenda.

I want to start, from the hop, by talking about the fact that we are in week three of Parliament and this government is moving on significant issues of importance, including having one Canadian economy, defence spending up to 2% of our NATO target, working to make sure big projects get done and engagement on the international stage with the G7. This Parliament and this government are working, and I look forward to my opposition colleagues joining the efforts of what this government is trying to get accomplished. It is clear from public opinion and clear from the election results on April 28 that Canadians like what they are seeing from this Prime Minister, his government and the leadership regarding what we are trying to get accomplished with this new government, moving forward.

The Conservative motion speaks to a company called GC Strategies. This was a two-person firm, an IT contractor. Canadians who have been watching the debate and the way that members have engaged may not recognize that the government, from day one of the

Auditor General's report, has wanted to work to implement the what is in the reports.

There was an absolute failure of procurement at the civil service level. It is important to separate those two things, because when we hear the way Conservative members in this place raise this issue, and we agree that it is an important issue to be raised, we hear the suggestion in their language that Liberal ministers themselves were involved in this. No, this was a failure of procurement at the civil service level.

I know there are some new members to this House, particularly on the other side. It is important to separate our Westminster tradition into the elected element of government versus the civil servants who do the work on behalf of government. Yes, there is ministerial accountability, and the ministers of the former Liberal government have engaged and worked to move forward, but at the end of the day, there is a separation. I would caution Conservative colleagues, when they stand in this place, to separate the difference, because they make clips of these things and send them home to their constituents, and Canadians who are not watching closely would be led to believe from the comments of the members on the opposite side that ministers themselves were absolutely involved with what we on the government side suggest was a failure of procurement.

That is a difference. That is about our level of engagement. It is a responsibility of every parliamentarian in this House to show a level of nuance, not to clip things, send them home and suggest that Liberal members or ministers are corrupt. That is dangerous language. That is not the way we should move forward.

After we go to members' statements, I look forward to continuing to litigate this argument because it is important. I look forward to talking about the ways the government is addressing the concerns the opposition is raising and how we will have a process to get the money back for taxpayers.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[Translation]

### AUTHENTIC CREATION

**Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since time immemorial, the arts have been an integral part of human life. From the Lascaux cave paintings to film, music, dance and poetry, all peoples throughout time have expressed themselves through art. It makes the world a more beautiful place, it inspires, it stirs our emotions, it brings love and meaning into our lives. When we marvel at a work of art, a symphony or a painting, we connect with the essence of who we are. Art is also the ability to empathize with the characters in a novel, to imagine oneself in another's shoes. It is a multitude of pathways to the humanity we all share, because creation is a human act.

Today, that very essence is under threat. On June 9, representatives of more than 25,000 Quebec artists published a manifesto in defence of authentic creation because, every day, artificial intelligence steals work without consent or compensation. AI-generated content must be identified, and the government must protect creators and their copyright, because culture is fundamentally human.

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[English]

#### BAY OF QUINTE CIDER COMPANY

**Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a great company in my riding of Bay of Quinte that is celebrating a major milestone this month. Located in Waupoos, The County Cider Company will be 30 years in business this June and is Ontario's longest-running craft cider company.

County Cider first started fermenting cider for the public back in 1995 and was founded by Grant Howes. Known as the grandfather of Ontario cider, Grant, who passed in 2017, created an institution that now attracts thousands of tourists each season. County Cider is now helmed by Grant's partner Jenifer Dean, who continues this legacy of helping others in the industry and promoting the county at large.

This Saturday, June 14, they are hosting an anniversary party at their estate. All are welcome.

For its importance to Prince Edward County and the Ontario craft cider industry as a whole, I want to congratulate County Cider on this incredible accomplishment.

\* \* \*

#### MESSAGE OF FAITH

**Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Canadians prepare to celebrate Canada Day, we are reminded of the foundations upon which our country was built. When the Fathers of Confederation founded this country in 1867, they recognized that Canada's strength would rest not only on law and government, but on the recognition of God's authority. There are 25 verses from the Bible in the architecture of Parliament, such as Psalm 72:8, which says, "he shall have dominion from sea to sea".

From these stone walls, the words taken from God's word remind us that freedom does not come from bureaucrats, global bodies or unelected elites. It comes from hard work, personal responsibility and the recognition of a higher authority. These words teach us that good government needs vision, justice and accountability to the people and to God.

As Canada Day approaches, let us give thanks to God for the blessings of freedom, peace and abundance, and recommit ourselves to being faithful to the biblical principles that have guided our nation since its birth. God keep our land glorious and free.

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#### ANNE RING

**Hon. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Dartmouth—Cole Harbour's Anne

#### Statements by Members

Ring, an extraordinary educator, athlete and community leader whose warmth and spirit touched all who knew her.

Anne led with heart in everything that she did, from hatching chicks in her classroom for the students to empowering young minds as a beloved principal. She brought joy and creativity to learning and believed deeply in the potential of every child. A national record-holding swimmer, ringette player, paddler, coach and Girl Guide leader, Anne had boundless energy. She skydived, scuba-dived, rode motorcycles and lived life fully and fearlessly.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Anne better through her passionate work to preserve and modernize the Banook Canoe Club. She was kind, smart and deeply committed to leaving this legacy for future generations on the lake she loved.

Anne Ring led a remarkable life. My thoughts are with her husband and all those who knew and loved her.

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#### RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour John Yakabuski, the recently retired MPP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Following in his father Paul Yakabuski's footsteps, John was first elected in 2003. His 22 years of service left an indelible mark. I heard him called Paul as often as John. He always took that as a compliment, having lived up to his father's standards.

John was the singing MPP, not just *O Canada* on solemn occasions, but crooning a repertoire of Mac Beattie. As minister of natural resources, John was a steadfast leader during Ottawa Valley crises, swiftly mobilizing aid to combat spring floods and marshalling firefighters against summer wildfires. His compassion shone through in initiatives like his 2010 album *Taking Care*, which raised funds for long-term care homes.

John's legacy is one of service, song and strength. We salute the remarkable contributions he made to the Ottawa Valley.

*Statements by Members*

● (1405)

### NOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL EXHIBITION

**Vince Gasparro (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, I had the opportunity to visit the Nova Exhibition in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence for the second time. It was my first visit alongside the member of Parliament for Toronto—St. Paul's and the Prime Minister. The exhibition commemorates the brutal massacre carried out by Hamas at the Nova music festival on October 7, 2023, which tragically claimed the lives of 1,200 Israelis and eight Canadians and had over 251 men, women and children taken hostage.

The exhibition is deeply moving as it retraces the harrowing events of October 7 and highlights the resilience of those who attended the festival. Sadly, it requires heightened security, a stark reminder of the continued threats faced by the Jewish community.

Just this week, the National Holocaust Monument was vandalized right here in Ottawa. We must stand united against the global rise of anti-Semitism. This exhibition stands as a timely and powerful call to confront anti-Semitism.

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### WOMEN VETERANS

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs released a landmark report. “Invisible No More. The Experiences of Canadian Women Veterans” was the first of its kind, finally putting on record women veterans' unique and often painful stories. From poor equipment more likely to injure than protect to unimaginable sexual trauma, more than 50 women showed their immense courage in sharing with the committee the realities of their service.

A tireless advocate for women veterans, Dr. Karen Breeck, rightly said:

I hope a day like this isn't just about appreciation for our service—I hope it becomes a day where women Veterans engage with their communities and parliamentarians to work together toward making things better for the next generation of women who wish to serve their country

I am honoured and humbled to stand in the presence of the incredible veterans joining us today in recognition of women veterans appreciation day. This is not a day for meaningless platitudes, but measurable action. It is my hope that this report paves the way for countless more women to serve Canada with pride and dignity.

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### SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARETS

**Jessica Fancy-Landry (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I rise today with my first member's statement, I do so with deep gratitude for the fine people of South Shore—St. Margarets. I thank them for placing their trust in me in this historic election. I want to thank my partner Ken, my daughter, the thousands of students I taught for over 17 years in my career as an educator, and my family and friends for being my rock. I also want to thank the incredible volunteers who gave their time, energy and knowledge in this effort. We concluded with 87 events in a 37-day election.

South Shore—St. Margarets is the heart of Canada's ocean playground. From Barrington to Tantallon, Caledonia to Lunenburg, our region is strong, resilient and full of heart. Together, in the House, let us invest in and build a future guided by compassion, opportunity, partnerships and strength, especially in rural Canada.

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### CANADIAN ENERGY SECTOR

**David McKenzie (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has spent 10 years strangling Canada's energy sector with red tape and anti-energy laws and policy. The world came to us to ask for our help in supporting its energy security, and the former Liberal prime minister said no, that there was no business case.

The fact is that pipelines and infrastructure will not be built because of four Liberal laws: Bill C-69, the “no new pipelines” act; Bill C-48, the west coast shipping ban; the job-killing oil and gas production cap; and the industrial carbon tax. Canada does not need the Liberal government to build pipelines. Canada needs the Liberal government to get out of the way so that the private sector can build our infrastructure and, in fact, make Canada an energy superpower.

Canadians call on the Liberal government to repeal their anti-energy laws and not just add more red tape to the pile. Let us stop the self-sabotage.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

### 275TH ANNIVERSARY OF MASCOUCHE

**Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Mascouche is celebrating its 275th anniversary. This city, whose name comes from an Algonquin word meaning “bear cub”, is one of the oldest communities in Quebec.

Known for its history and architectural heritage, this city has transcended time and has reinvented itself from one century to the next. What sets it apart is the special way it blends nature and bucolic charm with a vibrant city life. This duality gives it a certain *je ne sais quoi* that creates a unique atmosphere. I know what I am talking about, as I have lived there for 35 years.

When I think of Mascouche, I think of Jardin Moore, the equestrian trail, the walking trail on the seigneurial estate, the beautiful farmland, the Chez-Nous du Communautaire des Moulins co-operative, festivals like Grande Tribu, CHAPO, Frissons and Octenbulle, as well as the Côte à Côte theatre and the many family-friendly celebrations that make Mascouche a great place for young families.

I wish the people of Mascouche a happy 275th anniversary.

[English]

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, June 13 marks the second annual National Long-Term Care Day in Canada. Whether it is in Etobicoke Centre or across Canada, long-term care plays a vital role in the health and the quality of care of Canadians. In fact, over 200,000 Canadians currently reside in long-term care across Canada.

Today is important for a number of reasons: first of all, to remember the importance of long-term care; second, to thank the volunteers, the staff and the family members who give care to seniors in our long-term care homes. It is also a day when we can redouble our efforts to improve the quality of care in long-term care homes across Canada. Many seniors receive very good care, but there are still too many seniors in long-term care who do not receive the quality of care they deserve.

That is why I am proud to have advocated, along with a number of caucus colleagues a number of years ago, for the federal government to establish national standards for long-term care. The federal government did that. Now we need the provinces to adopt those standards, if we are going to make a difference for seniors in long-term care.

I hope that today we take this opportunity to advocate with provincial governments across Canada that they adopt the national standards so seniors get the quality of care they deserve.

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[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report is scathing.

GC Strategies received \$64 million from the Liberal government, but in many cases, there was no evidence that any work had been done. GC Strategies is a two-person company that has received \$64 million since the Liberals came to power. The estimated cost of the ArriveCAN app was \$80,000, but in the end it cost upwards of \$64 million. That is not double, triple or even quadruple the estimate; it is 800 times the amount. Had this happened in the private sector, everyone in the chain of command would have been laid off or fired, but these Liberal ministers were promoted.

A Conservative motion will be moved today, and I hope the vote will be unanimous.

\* \* \*

[English]

### FIELD OF DREAMS GRANT RECIPIENTS

**Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate two local organizations in Sackville—Bedford—Preston that were recently selected for the 2025 Field of Dreams grants through the Jays Care Foundation.

Sackville Minor Baseball will receive funding from the Toronto Blue Jays' official charity to refurbish Les Mayo Field in Lower Sackville, while the LWF Hardball Association will see upgrades to

### Statements by Members

George P. Vanier Field in Waverly. These upgrades are part of a national push to revamp local ball fields and give more kids a chance to play in safe, welcoming spaces.

Sport gives young people more than just exercise. It teaches teamwork and discipline. It helps kids find their footing, build friendships and feel like they belong, on and off the field.

Summer is coming, and with it the boys and girls of summer will soon be playing the great game of baseball on improved fields, thanks to the Jays Care Foundation.

Good luck to all players and coaches, and have a wonderful season.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's damning ArriveCAN audit confirms that the Liberal government failed to protect taxpayers' money. An app that was supposed to cost \$80,000 ballooned to at least \$60 million, and due to the poor record-keeping, the true total may never be known.

The Liberals handed GC Strategies contracts despite it being under RCMP investigation and lacking proper security clearances. They did not verify qualifications, did not verify market rates and, in many cases, did not even confirm that the work was done. That is not just incompetence; it is negligence, and the Trudeau ministers responsible were promoted.

GC Strategies gets to keep the cash while Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. Accepting the Auditor General's findings is simply not enough. The Liberals must take action, recover the wasted funds and repay Canadian taxpayers.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

### ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

**Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as an Italian Canadian and member of Parliament representing the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, I am honoured to rise in recognition of Italian Heritage Month. It is held in June, and Canadians have the opportunity to celebrate the vibrant culture, customs and traditions, as well as the invaluable contributions of Italian communities across Canada.

[Translation]

My Italian heritage has had a profound influence on the person I am today. I am proud and humbled to honour that heritage.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

From the arts to entrepreneurship, from cuisine to fashion, from science and technology to the lifestyle of la dolce vita, the influence of Italian Canadians is woven into the fabric of our society.

Throughout this month, Canadians are invited to discover and commemorate the Italian legacy and recognize the ongoing contributions of new generations, which continue to shape our country with passion, dedication and pride.

*Tanti auguri per il mese del patrimonio Italiano.*

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**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General just released a scathing audit on arrive scam contractor GC Strategies. Last year, the government awarded 106 contracts to GC Strategies, worth a total of \$92 million, with \$64 million already paid out. However, 50% of these contracts did not enforce security requirements. Much of the work performed was not monitored. Many contractors did not have the experience or qualifications needed. Procurement policies were not followed, and there was no demonstration of value for money, nor that deliverables were actually received. Yet, unbelievably, the government kept authorizing payment.

Every time there is a Liberal corruption scandal, it seems that the ministers responsible get promoted and the taxpayer gets the bill. Conservatives are calling on the government to get taxpayers their money back within 100 days and impose a lifetime contracting ban on GC Strategies. Canadians are watching to see if the government will actually support them in getting their money back.

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**WOMEN VETERANS**

**Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, throughout history, women have stepped up to serve our country in the Canadian Armed Forces: from the Wrens in World War II to the Persian Gulf War, where women first served in combat roles, to today, with a female chief of the defence staff. Women have come a long way, but it was not always easy. Women veterans still suffer today from health issues, military sexual trauma and other harms that were caused not by our adversaries but by a military culture that did not recognize that we cannot have a fully capable fighting force without full inclusion. We owe it to them to do better.

One year ago today, the veterans affairs committee tabled a seminal report called “Invisible No More”. Today, some of the brave women who testified are visiting Parliament to ask that all the recommendations be fully implemented and that June 12 be women veterans appreciation day.

To them and all servicewomen, we thank them and we see them.

**ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a new Parliament, but we are dealing with the same old Liberal scandals.

The Auditor General has released a report against the Liberal government on the multi-million dollar ArriveCAN debacle. The Liberals gave \$64 million to GC Strategies, a two-person IT firm that did no actual work and is currently under RCMP investigation.

Today, this House is considering our Conservative motion to get Canadians their money back within 100 days. Will the Liberals vote to give back this \$64 million to Canadians, yes or no?

• (1420)

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will address that question in a moment.

I am devastated to learn of the Air India crash that occurred earlier this morning. The flight was carrying 242 people, one of whom was Canadian. We are in touch with our international partners, and I have been speaking with Canadians this morning. I am sure that all members of this House will join in extending our collective condolences to the families of those who have lost loved ones this morning.

**Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we also extend condolences to the families.

The Liberals should not be dodging accountability. They want to hide their scandals from Canadians, but the Auditor General report is very clear. The Liberal government ignored the rules and allowed insiders to profit to the tune of \$64 million. The Liberals have shown a complete disdain for hard-working Canadians by promoting the very same ministers who engaged in the cronyism and corruption.

Why should wasteful Liberal politicians get promoted while Canadian taxpayers get a \$64-million bill?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that we have implemented the measures recommended by the Auditor General in previous reports as well as internal audits.

We have revoked the security clearance of GC Strategies. We have terminated all contracts with GC Strategies. We have barred GC Strategies from future contracts with the Government of Canada. We have taken legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP.



*Oral Questions*

We will never tolerate misconduct from our suppliers or their subcontractors.

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General released a scathing audit this week on the top arrive scam contractor, GC Strategies. This two-person company, under RCMP investigation, received a jaw-dropping \$64 million from the Liberals. The old ministers responsible for this all got promoted by the Prime Minister and are sitting as ministers right there, right now.

Canadians are incensed by these same old Liberal ministers continuing in their corrupt ways. A simple question for the Prime Minister, when are Canadians going to get their money back?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always protect the integrity of our procurement process, which is why we have implemented recommendations from the Auditor General from past reports, such as increasing transparency, strengthening oversight and clarifying the roles and responsibilities across departments.

We will always hold bad actors to account, which is why we have taken legal actions against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP. We will always protect the integrity of our procurement process.

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that answer does not cut it for Canadians struggling to pay their bills in record numbers.

These old Liberals have turned arrive scam into a master class in rewarding failure and corruption. The old ministers responsible for this scam are the same old ministers sitting over there as cabinet ministers right now. These same old ministers are ignoring the rules, allowing their insiders to get rich with taxpayers' hard-earned money.

Why do corrupt Liberal ministers keep getting promoted, while Canadians keep getting the bill?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear. We will never tolerate misconduct from our suppliers or their subcontractors, which is why we have taken legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP. We have barred them from contracting with the Canadian government. We have revoked their security clearance.

This is the mandate we were elected on, to make sure that we have the best-in-class procurement system in this country.

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has confirmed what the Conservatives feared. The Liberal government paid \$60 million for a project that was originally expected to cost \$80,000. The outcome is waste, uncertainty and incompetence. However, not a single minister lost their job. Worse still, they were rewarded in the new cabinet.

Will the Prime Minister do the honourable thing and vote in favour of our motion to return this money to taxpayers?

• (1425)

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always protect the integrity of our procurement system. That is why we are implementing the recommendations made by the Auditor General in previous reports. That is why we referred cases to the RCMP. We have taken legal action against GC Strategies. We revoked its security clearances. We terminated all contracts with GC Strategies. We even banned it from obtaining contracts with the Government of Canada for the next seven years. Why? We will never tolerate misconduct by our suppliers or their subcontractors.

**Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report is damning. Contracts were awarded without tender, without oversight and without justification. While Canadians are getting poorer, certain companies are getting richer. Some of the ministers responsible for this fiasco have even been promoted.

Can the Prime Minister explain why he is choosing to reward those who allowed such a mess to happen, rather than holding them to account?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear. We will never accept misconduct from our suppliers or their subcontractors. We will always hold them to account. That is why we terminated all contracts with GC Strategies over a year ago, revoked its security clearances and banned it from securing Government of Canada contracts for the next seven years. We have also initiated legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP. Why? It is because we will always protect the integrity of our procurement system.

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## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has given notice of a gag order on Bill C-5. The House has been sitting for just three weeks, and he already wants to ram through a bill, and not just any bill. Bill C-5 gives him the power to rule by decree on fossil fuel projects. Bill C-5 completely guts environmental assessments. Bill C-5 threatens Quebec's jurisdiction and the rights of indigenous peoples. It makes no sense to let it go through without debate, studies or hearing from witnesses.

Will the Prime Minister let Parliament do its job?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians, including Quebecers, have spoken loud and clear about the need to transform our economy. This is partly because of the tariff war illegally triggered by our friends and neighbours to the south, but it is also because we are here to pivot to a modern economy, to help our country grow, and to provide good jobs for Quebecers and Canadians across the country. This bill is necessary, and we are moving forward.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is going to have to leave the banker behind and start acting like a democrat. Bill C-5 raises major concerns about the environment and Quebec's sovereignty over its own territory. If there is one bill that needs to be studied thoroughly, it is this one. The Prime Minister has no right to move closure on Bill C-5 when the bill gives him unprecedented, exceptional powers.

Is the Prime Minister's intention to bypass Parliament and govern by executive order like Donald Trump?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers elected 44 Liberal MPs, the largest number of Liberal MPs from Quebec since 1980. These members all ran on a Liberal platform that talked about the need to act quickly to accelerate our country's growth, remove barriers between provinces and create one Canadian economy starting on page one. We are acting democratically.

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**CARBON PRICING**

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, every one of the 44 Liberals from Quebec voted to steal \$814 million from Quebecers. The Liberals from Quebec voted to make Quebecers pay for election goodies for Canadians. The Liberals from Quebec voted against the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous demand that Quebecers be reimbursed. The Liberals, elected by Quebecers who were afraid that the Conservatives would drag us back to the Stone Age, abolished the carbon tax and rewarded Canadians with our money.

Are they not ashamed to be working against their constituents?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I would like to remind my colleague that we still have carbon pricing for large corporations, for major emitters, that results in three times as many emissions reductions as consumer pricing. We have a robust carbon pricing system, and the federal price per tonne is almost double the Quebec price. Quebec's price is \$59, and the federal government's price is \$95. We will continue fighting climate change while building a robust economy for Canada.

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● (1430)

[English]

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal consultants are getting millions in contracts with-

out the required security clearances or experience. Worse, they do not even have to do any work. The Auditor General found evidence that nearly half of government contracts were paid out but not actually completed. While Liberal insiders get rich, Canadian families struggle to pay for food. In true Liberal fashion, of course, the ministers responsible have been promoted by the Prime Minister.

When will the government support today's Conservative motion to ensure that Canadians get their money back?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Auditor General for her report. We have already acted on previous recommendations she has put forward. We have taken legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP because we will never tolerate bad behaviour from our suppliers or their contractors.

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Prime Minister has the backs of Liberal insiders and backroom cronies, not hard-working Canadians. It is business as usual for the Prime Minister, who has no plans to cut the gravy train to Liberal consultants with no intention to actually complete work. While the RCMP investigates fraud on Canadians, those ministers responsible get a pat on the back, and they get promoted.

Will the Prime Minister impose a lifetime ban on the founders of GC Strategies and all aligned entities and individuals today and, of course, get Canadians their money back?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have highlighted in previous answers, we will always protect the integrity of our procurement process. This is why we have put in place the office of supplier integrity, which has banned GC Strategies for seven years. We have revoked their security clearance. We have taken legal actions against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP because we will never tolerate bad actions from suppliers or their contractors.

The member talks about having the backs of Canadians; the Conservatives have an opportunity to support a tax cut for 22 million Canadians right after question period. I hope they will do it for a change.

**Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government ignored procurement rules, accountability and basic common sense to funnel sweetheart contracts to their friends at GC Strategies, the ones who were behind ArriveCAN. It handed out an eye-watering \$64 million in taxpayer money to Liberal insiders, with no evidence that any work was actually completed.

Will the Liberals take responsibility, show respect to Canadian taxpayers and get the money back?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think I have made it abundantly clear in previous answers that we will always protect the integrity of our procurement process, which is why we have taken legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the RCMP, and we will always hold bad actors to account.

**Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that answer would not take the scum off rice pudding. The report from the Auditor General was clear: No work was done. The only thing delivered was a cheque to Liberal insiders. Despite an RCMP investigation and \$64 million wasted, the cabinet ministers responsible were not fired. They were promoted to new titles, bigger offices, all courtesy of the Prime Minister; talk about failing upwards.

Why is it that under the Liberal government, failure is rewarded and Canadian taxpayers get stuck with the bill?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have noted before, we will always defend the integrity of our procurement process. We will never tolerate any form of misconduct from our suppliers or their contractors, which is why we have revoked GC Strategies' security clearance. We terminated all contracts more than a year ago. Now the office of supplier integrity has barred them from contracting with the Canadian government. We have referred cases to the RCMP. We have taken legal action. We will always hold bad actors responsible.

**Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a complete and totally comprehensive non-answer that was. Earlier this week, the Auditor General released their scathing audit, stating that GC Strategies was paid \$64 million for the ArriveCAN app, with little to no evidence of any work having been completed. The Auditor General made note that this is just one example of what is likely a widespread issue. There may be a new prime minister, but it is the same old Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister stand up today and vote for our Conservative motion to return this money to hard-working Canadian taxpayers, yes or no?

• (1435)

[Translation]

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the Auditor General for her work.

I would like to point out that we have taken action on all of her past recommendations, but we did not stop there. We terminated all

contracts with GC Strategies over a year ago. We have revoked their security clearances. We have launched legal action against GC Strategies. We have referred cases to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Why? It is for the simple reason that we will always defend the integrity of our procurement system and hold bad suppliers and their contractors to account.

**Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a report released on Tuesday, the Auditor General indicated that the Liberal government did not follow the rules regarding the contracts awarded to GC Strategies. A total of \$64 million was given to this two-person company. Moreover, there is no evidence of any work being done.

This morning, the Conservatives moved a motion to ban this company for life.

Will the Liberal government vote with us and get that money back for Canadians?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will be pleased to know that last week, the office of supplier integrity that we put in place decided to ban GC Strategies from bidding on contracts with the Government of Canada. I would add that more than a year ago, we terminated all contracts with GC Strategies. We have taken legal action against the company. We have referred cases to the RCMP.

Why? It is because we will never tolerate misconduct from our suppliers or their contractors.

**Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are not asking for a seven-year ban, but a lifetime ban.

There are always scandals with this Liberal government. The Liberals ignore the rules; they allow their buddies to get rich. The taxpayers of Beauce and the rest of Canada are paying for it.

The Prime Minister had the opportunity to change the situation by replacing the cabinet ministers responsible, but no, he gave them a cushy promotion instead.

Why, under the Liberals, are politicians rewarded while Canadians foot the bill?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always defend the integrity of our procurement system. That is why, more than a year ago, we terminated all contracts with GC Strategies. We have revoked its security clearances. We have implemented the Auditor General's recommendations from previous reports to ensure that bad suppliers are held to account. We have referred cases to the RCMP concerning that company. We have taken legal action against GC Strategies.

On this side of the House, we will always hold bad actors accountable.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what do a foreign entity involved in the killing of a Canadian on Canadian soil, a tyrant who ordered the dismemberment of a journalist at an embassy in Turkey, and a malicious leader who silences any form of opposition have in common?

The answer is, of course, that they are all honoured guests of the Prime Minister at the G7. Human rights should not get in the way of a good business opportunity, after all. That is the new Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister listen to reason and immediately withdraw his indecent invitations?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the world has an international security crisis on its hands. We must never lose sight of the fact that our sovereignty, security and prosperity are tied to overall global stability.

Canada believes in collaboration. The G7 is an essential forum for world leaders to have frank and productive discussions.

Security, stability and protection are necessary for Canadians. At the same time, we must have these conversations.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Justin Trudeau welcomed “those fleeing persecution, terror and war” to Canada. We remember the fiasco that this tweet caused and the impact that it had on our intake capacity. Nevertheless, Justin Trudeau wanted to welcome the persecuted. Now the new Prime Minister has chosen to welcome the persecutors.

Are there any Liberals on the other side who will talk to their leader, the Prime Minister, and ask him to rescind the invitations to Modi, bin Salman and bin Zayed, or are we to understand that the Liberals now see human rights as a thing of the past?

• (1440)

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the G7 is an important forum for international dialogue with international leaders. At the same time, we must have security and the necessary conversations about protecting our fellow citizens and our population. That is our top priority.

We will do that, and we will always protect Canadians.

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are questions on the public safety minister's recent recusals. Was the Ethics Commissioner consulted prior to the public safety minister setting up an internal conflict screen? Can the Prime Minister explain to this House why the minister has recused himself?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in all national security decisions, my utmost concern is that of the safety of Canadians. I will support law enforcement and national security agencies, who do their work impartially and effectively. In an abundance of caution, and to ensure that there is no perception of any conflict, I have asked the public safety officials to implement a screen on national security issues relating to the Tamil community.

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**JUSTICE**

**Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, an offender was recently sentenced to house arrest for possessing child sexual abuse and exploitation material. The victims of such deplorable materials are living a psychological life sentence. Whom do I blame for this? It is not the judge, not the prosecutor and not the defence lawyer. I blame weak Liberal laws that allow people like these to serve their sentence on the couch.

Will the public safety minister recognize this injustice and stop allowing house arrest for people who watch sexual abuse of children?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me condemn, in the harshest possible terms, sexual crimes committed against children. As a former prosecutor, I am sure my hon. colleague would know that the law on the books today actually holds a mandatory minimum penalty of one year's imprisonment for these types of heinous crimes. I hope that this does not become a bipartisan issue. We want to work together to implement reforms, not only to punish heinous crimes but to prevent these harms from becoming a life-time problem for vulnerable children.

## MARINE TRANSPORTATION

**Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite having world-class shipbuilders such as Seaspan in Vancouver, BC Ferries has chosen a Chinese state-owned enterprise to build four new ships, even though the Prime Minister has declared China the biggest security threat to Canada. Meanwhile, the Liberals are providing BC Ferries with \$36 million, with no conditions to protect Canadian workers.

Will the minister grow a spine of Canadian-manufactured steel and make Canadian jobs a requirement for this funding, or will she side with Premier Eby in selling out our ship- and steel-building industries?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government will always side with Canadian workers, particularly in our steel and aluminum sectors, which are being battered right now. I was disappointed and concerned when I learned of this procurement, particularly at this moment, when Canadian workers need our support. BC Ferries is entirely under provincial jurisdiction. The support BC Ferries receives from Transport Canada is entirely for operations, and there is no capital expenditure.

**Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a great non-answer.

Yesterday the Minister of Transport refused to act on my concern over BC Ferries' buying four ships from a Chinese state-owned shipyard. She used the excuse that it was not a federal project, which was not the question that I asked. The Liberals should be supporting Canadian shipyards and our economy instead of supporting CCP-owned shipyards and their economy.

Again, I ask this: Will the Liberals attach the obvious condition of buying Canadian-built ships in order for BC Ferries to get their over \$30-million Liberal subsidy?

• (1445)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that we need to be supporting Canadian shipbuilders. That is why we have a national shipbuilding strategy. I absolutely agree that we need to be supporting Canadian steel and aluminum workers, and further, I agree that we need to be alive to national security challenges and bear those in mind when it comes to procurement.

I have spoken to my B.C. counterpart about this issue, and I would underscore that BC Ferries is entirely under provincial jurisdiction. I do not think any B.C. MPs would challenge federal support for operations of ferries.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that Canadian production of critical minerals could drop by nearly 60% in 2040.

It is not really surprising. Mining projects in Canada under the Liberals take forever to develop. However, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has exceptional geological potential, including phosphate.

## Oral Questions

Since 2018, we have been working to include it on the list of critical minerals.

Why are the Liberals incapable of delivering the goods and developing our resources?

[English]

**Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, mining is crucial to our economy, and Canada is facing American tariffs. We must support our mining workers. That is why we will speed up permitting of new mines by cutting red tape and approving projects within two years. This will create jobs for Canadians, grow our economy and provide more opportunity for mining workers in our country. We hope our members across the aisle will support the one Canadian economy act.

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## INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Hon. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced the one Canadian economy act, which aims to help advance major projects through the regulatory process. We have seen indigenous people across Canada strongly assert the requirement for consultation before major projects are approved.

Can the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations tell us about how consultations will happen under the new act?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this bill requires meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples, consistent with section 35 of the Constitution and the duty to consult. It would require consultation both during the process of determining which projects are in the national interest and, most important, once a project is selected during the permitting process. Both steps would require our indigenous partners. I look forward to continuing to engage with partners to ensure the success of the legislation and the involvement of indigenous peoples in moving our economy forward.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

**Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the average Canadian family is going to spend \$800 more on food this year because of Liberal inflationary spending. The Calgary Food Bank organizers say that 65% of working Calgarians are now experiencing severe food insecurity. What affects this, of course, is bad government budgeting. Deficits lead to inflation, and the government plans to spend 8% more this coming year. The Liberals want to go on a spending spree and force Canadians to go on a diet.

Will the Prime Minister set the table and finally serve up this year's budget?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is good news for Canadians: Over 22 million Canadians are going to receive a tax cut thanks to the work of this Parliament. Further good news is that, in the last election, Canadians coast to coast to coast said that the kinds of measures that are helping them are affordable child care; the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation; the national food program; and the Canada disability benefit, which will be available next month. These are the kinds of things that are making a difference for Canadians. We just hope that the Conservatives will stop voting against them.

**Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are delaying tabling a budget as it is expected to show a super-size deficit that will increase inflation even further; the higher the deficit, the higher the inflation. The price Canadians pay for food is dependent upon the government's budget. However, we should not worry; the government's budgets affect only Canadians who eat.

Will the government stop driving up costs and bring forward a budget so that Canadians can feed their families without going further into debt?

• (1450)

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at some economic facts. Inflation has dropped from 8.1% to 1.7% over the last two years. Our real GDP numbers are growing. We have had workforce participation of 65.3% versus 62.5%, compared to the U.S.A. We have a AAA Moody's credit rating.

The fundamentals of our economy are very strong. We have a strong mandate from Canadians, and we are going to continue to work together across the aisle to get things done for Canadians.

**Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, let us look at some actual facts.

StatsCan reports that for every dollar of disposable income, Canadians now owe \$1.74; this is the worst debt ratio in the G7. Oshawa's unemployment is at 9.1%, and TD Bank warns of a looming recession, with 100,000 jobs at risk. The government's response is to blow through \$500 billion with no budget, no plan and no accountability.

Will the Liberals finally table a budget, or will their silence continue to speak louder than their commitment to Canadians?

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State**

**(Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think we all know who brought it home in the last election; it was every member on this side of the House. Why did Canadians vote for this Liberal government? It is because they know we are compassionate and we care about the affordability challenges that they are facing.

We have a plan to create good jobs, build a stronger economy and make life more affordable. What do Conservatives have? They have none of the above. They have complaints, anger, an absent leader and divisive rhetoric.

We are delivering for Canadians and making Canada strong.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Waterloo Region Record says that Ontario businesses are freezing summer hiring. Unemployment in the region is up—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry; I cannot hear the question, so we will start from the top.

**Kelly DeRidder:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Waterloo Region Record says that Ontario businesses are freezing summer hiring. Unemployment in the region is up 7.3%, and TD Bank says there is a looming recession with job losses of 100,000 jobs, causing local businesses to focus on staying lean. Nearly one-third of Canadian small businesses have adjusted or paused their summer hiring plans, according to a survey by Merchant Growth.

Kitchener businesses need a plan. A budget is a plan. Why does the government refuse to heed our calls and table a budget that reverses its inflationary spending?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is good news for Canadian youth this summer. In addition to the 70,000 Canada summer jobs, we are adding 6,000 more all across the country. We know that this is an emergency valve for youth unemployment, which is indeed rising. However, what will not help is voting against the measures that Canadians are looking for this summer. What we know is that Canadians vote every single time there is an opportunity to help the constituents in their riding. We will not do that; we will stand up for Canadian families.

### CARBON PRICING

**Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, small businesses fought for five years to receive the carbon tax rebate. Now that the money has been disbursed to small businesses across Canada, they are seeking clarification as to whether or not the Canada Revenue Agency will treat it as a taxable benefit.

Can the Government of Canada clarify this today? Yes or no, are carbon tax rebates taxable?

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, small businesses are the backbone of our Canadian economy, and our new government has their back. We are cutting taxes for small businesses and red tape. We are breaking down interprovincial trade barriers by July 1 and helping businesses go digital. We also welcome our middle-class tax cut, which will help entrepreneurs get a well-deserved tax break while they can.

We will always be there for small businesses. Let us not forget that we have cut the carbon tax for small business as well.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is responsible for over one-fifth of the world's canola exports, with China being one of the largest buyers. The Communist regime in Beijing implemented 100% tariffs on canola oil and meal, but there has been radio silence from the Prime Minister.

Farmers plan their crop rotations years in advance, and they have had to ride out this trade war all on their own. Will the Prime Minister prioritize our farmers for once and end China's tariffs on our canola, or is he too compromised from Brookfield's quarter-billion dollar loan from a Chinese bank?

**Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a little over three weeks, and I am finally getting to my feet.

First and foremost, I want to thank the people of Malpeque for putting me here, as well as my wife and my family.

This is immensely important for us, and I will be travelling to the prairie provinces this weekend to meet with farmers to see firsthand the effect of the canola tariffs. I will say that we had the international trade minister meeting with officials and the Prime Minister. We are moving in the right direction, and we will always stand up for farmers.

**Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, farmers in Souris—Moose Mountain and across the prairies are being crushed by crippling 100% tariffs on canola. The Liberal government has done nothing. These unjust tariffs are jeopardizing family farms, threatening livelihoods and undermining the backbone of our agricultural economy. While producers urgently seek leadership and support, the Liberals remain silent.

### Oral Questions

When will the Liberals take real, concrete action to eliminate these punitive tariffs on Canadian canola and, for once, stand up for Canadian farmers?

**Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to talk about how important farming is in this country. One in nine jobs is related to farming, and 6.75% of our GDP is related to farming. I have spoken to every first minister across the country, and one thing we have in common is that we are united in our front against these tariffs, and we will stay that way because it is going to benefit everybody.

\* \* \*

### STEEL AND ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just days after the minister's promise-filled visit to ArcelorMittal this past weekend in Hamilton, ArcelorMittal has announced the closure of its Long wire mill, resulting in a loss of 153 mortgage-paying jobs in my community. Yesterday, I spoke to a concerned father whose daughter, Amanda, lost her job to the mill closure. Her father stated that the Prime Minister had promised tariff relief on TV.

When will Amanda get her tariff relief?

**Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are fighting these illegal and unjustified tariffs every day. They are hurting workers on both sides of the border, including Canadian workers and Canadian companies. The government will not be bullied. We are going to fight against these tariffs, defending every job and every business in Hamilton, in the Soo and across Canada.

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot take that answer to the hard workers of Hamilton. This closure is not just a local story. It is a warning sign to all working Canadians in this country. The Prime Minister promised elbows up with the United States and to collect \$20 billion. All we have seen is elbows down.

I ask this question of the Prime Minister on behalf of the workers of Hamilton's industrial corridor and Canadians: Is this the end of closures or just the beginning?

[Translation]

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that these tariffs were imposed by the United States. These are U.S. tariffs that have been put on our products.

Our government will be there to help workers and businesses get through this difficult period. We need everyone's co-operation to get through this crisis.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our new government was elected to implement a strong vision for nature conservation on land and sea, as well as improved access for Canadians.

Could the Secretary of State for Nature inform the House of the measures our government will take to protect nature in Canada?

• (1500)

**Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time rising in the House, I will take a moment to thank my constituents in the beautiful riding of Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville for their trust and support.

Nature is a fundamental part of the Canadian identity. It brings us together, and Canadians of every political stripe love nature. This new government will work with the provinces, territories, indigenous peoples and all stakeholders to protect nature.

That is what a united Canada means.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, the Liberals forced through one piece of censorship legislation after another: Bill C-18, which stops the spread of news on social media outlets; Bill C-11, which controls what Canadians can see and say online; and then Bill C-63, which is bloated censorship legislation that brought in an Internet czar and controls freedom of speech.

The Liberals claim that this is a “new government”. My curiosity is for whoever is in charge over there: Will the Liberals commit to respecting Canadians and, of course, stop censoring them?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for decades, we have witnessed journalists losing their jobs, newsrooms shutting down and local media going bankrupt. Access to fact-based information from coast to coast to coast is essential to keeping Canadians informed. Unfortunately, my Conservative colleagues do not believe that preserving this pillar of our democracy is important.

On our side, we chose to pass the Online News Act to ensure that journalists can continue their important work for our country, our democracy and our Canadian unity.

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing is that this is the same old government, which is absolutely hell-bent on continuing to censor what Canadians can see and say online.

My question is with regard to Bill C-63 going forward. Bill C-63 does not just target predators. It targets opinions, freedom of thought and discourse within the online sphere. It institutes the thought police, for crying out loud. It is a Trojan Horse for further government control.

I will ask this again: In any future legislation going forward, will the Liberal government commit to respecting Canadians and making sure that it does not censor them?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just about everything the member said in her intervention is wrong. Bill C-11 ensures that Canadian artists get rewarded, as they should, by online platforms. Bill C-11 makes sure that Canadian content can be discovered by Canadians, by my kids, by all of our kids, instead of just international artists. That is exactly what Bill C-11 does. It gives the opportunity for Canadians to discover Canadian artists, something we should all support.

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, baseless smears like that are why the Liberals cannot be trusted to regulate speech in this country. For years, the Liberal government has been determined to censor what Canadians see and say online, from Bill C-11, which put the Liberals in control of YouTube algorithms, to Bill C-18, which squeezed out small and independent media, and their thought crime bill, Bill C-63. Now we have learned through the National Post that the cabinet ministers over there are all clamouring over who gets to be responsible for the latest online censorship law.

Will the minister who gets to censor what Canadians say please reveal themselves now?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, even Google agreed that it should do this. Google will pay \$100 million to help Canadian journalism in this country. An international, U.S.-based company, is agreeing to do that, but the Conservative Party of Canada would vote against it, would prevent it from happening and would want to prevent our media from getting \$100 million so there is more local content and more journalists hired in our newsrooms across the country. It is simply unthinkable. It is immoral.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, fentanyl has torn through communities and ripped families apart throughout various areas of Canada. Our government was given a strong mandate to keep all Canadians safe.

Can the Minister of Public Safety update the House on the recent law enforcement seizures, which are keeping drugs off the streets of Canada?



• (1505)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to thank my hon. colleague from Humber River—Black Creek for her question and for her hard work. Every member of the House knows someone who has been impacted by the fentanyl crisis. Earlier this week, the Ontario Provincial Police announced two operations that seized 43.5 kilograms of fentanyl, the largest ever fentanyl seizures in its history. Through the strong borders act, we would ensure that police across the country have the tools needed to replicate the success of these operations. We will always be there to keep Canadians protected.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, “they are waiting for us to die so they can keep the money”. That shocking statement is from Richard Nantais, a thalidomide victim from Thetford Mines. The issue is that the government paid Epiq \$70 million to manage the program.

According to Le Journal de Montréal, since 2019, the firm has compensated only 16 victims. It has rejected 174 applications and left 150 people, like Mr. Nantais, waiting.

When will the Minister of Health fire Epiq and demand a refund so that the money goes directly into the pockets of victims, not legal consultants?

**Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, we know what all the thalidomide victims have gone through, so our hearts go out to them.

I will come back to my colleague about this, because I do not have the answer to his question.

\* \* \*

[English]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Prime Minister said, “The old relationship we had with the United States based on deepening integration of our economies...and military cooperation is over”. Yesterday, a leaked document revealed his government is willing to participate in Donald Trump's Golden Dome missile defence system. Former Liberal foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy called this “a betrayal of the vision Canadians voted for.”

Why is the Prime Minister deepening military integration with an unstable partner when we should be pivoting away?

**Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for 75 years, our government has been an essential partner in strengthening NORAD, the only binational command in the world. We know that we live in a more dangerous world. That is why this new government has undertaken a wide array of discussions with the United States about a new security and economic relationship that would benefit both of our sovereign nations. For example, the Prime Minister recently made a \$6-billion new investment in an Arctic over-the-horizon radar system.

### Government Orders

We are actively strengthening Canada's presence in the continent, and we will build our country's national defence capabilities of all kinds.

\* \* \*

### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

**Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-5 violates constitutional obligations, eradicates environmental protections, compromises workers' health and safety, and fails to hold corporations accountable in cases where violence is inflicted on indigenous women and girls, which is one of the calls for justice from the national inquiry.

We thought Pierre Poilievre lost his seat, but it seems like he is leading the Liberal Party. Is that why the government is trying to fast-track Bill C-5?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that Canada is facing a critical moment. We all know our country is being battered by U.S. tariffs.

Last week, I was in Saskatoon, and around the table were premiers, including NDP premiers, Conservative premiers and Liberal premiers. They all understood that now is the time to build Canada and tear down barriers to trade between ourselves.

I really hope all members of the House will recognize the urgency of the moment and support this essential legislation.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

#### MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR CANADIANS ACT

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act respecting certain affordability measures for Canadians and another measure, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:09 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-4.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*Government Orders**(Division No. 8)*

## YEAS

## Members

Aboultaif	Acan
Aitchison	Al Soud
Albas	Ali
Allison	Alty
Anand	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Auguste	Baber
Bailey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Bardeesy	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill Riv- er)
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)	Bendayan
Berthold	Bexte
Bezan	Bittle
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Blois	Bonin
Bonk	Borrelli
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carney	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chambers	Champoux
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Chong	Church
Clark	Cobena
Cody	Connors
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Dandurand
Danko	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Niagara South)
Dawson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
DeRidder	Deschênes
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan	Dzerowicz
Earle	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Fancy-Landry	Fanjoy
Fergus	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Gaheer	Gainey
Gallant	Garon
Gasparro	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill (Calgary Skyview)	Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)	Gill (Windsor West)

Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassi- nan)	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Grant
Greaves	Groleau
Guay	Guglielmin
Guilbeault	Gull-Masty
Gunn	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardy	Harrison Hill
Hepfner	Hirtle
Ho	Hoback
Hodgson	Hogan
Holman	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Idlout	Jackson
Jaczek	Jansen
Jeneroux	Jivani
Johns	Joseph
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khanna
Kibble	Kirkland
Klassen	Kmiec
Konanz	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kronis	Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot)
Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lavack
Lavoie	Lawrence
Lawton	LeBlanc
Lefebvre	Leitão
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Ma
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacDonald (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Mahal
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Malette (Kapusking—Timmins— Mushkegowuk)
Maloney	Mantle
Martel	May
Mazier	McCauley
McGuinty	McKelvie
McKenzie	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McKnight	McLean (Calgary Centre)
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	McPherson
Melillo	Ménard
Mendès	Menegakis
Michel	Miedema
Miller	Mingarelli
Moore	Morin
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Muys
Myles	Naqvi
Nater	Nathan
Nguyen	Noormohamed
Normandin	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olsewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Provost
Ramsay	Rana
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Reynolds
Richards	Roberts

Robertson  
Romanado  
Ross  
Royer  
Sahota  
Sarai  
Savard-Tremblay  
Scheer  
Schmale  
Sgro  
Shipley  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Small  
Sousa  
Ste-Marie  
St-Pierre  
Strauss  
Sudds  
Thériault  
Thompson  
Tolmie  
Uppal  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Viersen  
Vis  
Warkentin  
Wagh  
Wilkinson  
Yip  
Zerucelli  
Zuberi— 335

Rocheffort  
Rood  
Rowe  
Ruff  
Saini  
Sari  
Sawatzky  
Schieffe  
Seeback  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Sodhi  
Steinley  
Stevenson  
Strahl  
Stubbs  
Tesser Derksen  
Thomas  
Tochor  
Turnbull  
Valdez  
Van Popta  
Vien  
Villeneuve  
Wagantall  
Watchorn  
Weiler  
Williamson  
Zahid  
Zimmer

## NAYS

Nil

## PAIRED

### Members

Champagne  
Joly  
Plamondon

Dancho  
Majumdar  
Solomon— 6

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Thursday question is always an exciting time of the week. I have an excellent question for the government House leader.

First, I would like to know what business the leader has planned for the House for tomorrow and for the coming week, which may be the last week before the summer recess. At the same time, is there a short day planned so that Canadians can finally see a budget tabled by the government?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my hon. colleague that there will be a government budget in the fall, which is something that all Canadians except the Conservatives

## Business of Supply

seem to know. It will be an excellent budget that will invest in the Canadian economy and create opportunities from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

This afternoon, we will continue the debate on the Conservative Party's opposition day motion. In accordance with the order adopted by the House yesterday, we will have a fifth and final committee of the whole debate on the estimates later this evening for two hours. Tomorrow morning, we will start the debate on Government Business No. 1, which establishes a process to adopt Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act. We will continue with this debate on Monday.

• (1525)

[Translation]

I would also like to inform the House that Tuesday will be the last designated day of this financial cycle. On Wednesday, we will resume second reading of Bill C-2 respecting the security of the border between Canada and the United States. On Thursday, we will begin second reading debate on Bill C-3, which amends the Citizenship Act.

\* \* \*

## HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and you will find that there is unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding Standing Order 28 or any other usual practice of the House, the following proposed calendar for the year 2026, referred to as Option G, be tabled and that the House adopt this calendar.

[English]

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, the time provided for government orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

### OPPOSITION MOTION—GC STRATEGIES INC.

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand I have about 16 minutes left in my remarks, which is a great opportunity to be able to litigate the opposition day motion that has been put before this House.

*Business of Supply*

A lot of Conservative members have stayed around, and I look forward to engaging with them in my round of questions. It is always fun to barb back and forth and to engage in this House.

I think this is important. Every one of us as parliamentarians has support systems at home, the people who support us in our constituency office and help allow us to get to this place. There are two members who may or may not be in and around the capital region or around this House who I want to recognize and get their names into the Hansard: Burnell Lyons, a long-time volunteer in the Annapolis Valley who joined my office about a year ago; and Kaleb Boates, who is a summer student. They are two fine gentlemen who do great work. It has really been nice to have them up around the Ottawa region. I want to make sure that their names forever live in the Hansard and that their work for the good people of Kings—Hants is recognized.

Turning to the important element of why we are here today, I want to get back to where I was before question period, which is the separation between the political actors of government. We are never permanent here; we are elected to come to this place. Ministers are nominated to cabinet to serve king and country. However, it is the civil service that actually delivers the programs. When we listen to the Conservatives on the benches, and I noticed it during question period, they blur the lines between the political representation of the government and the civil servants who actually conduct the work on behalf of government.

What has not been litigated during this opposition day debate, and for which the Conservatives have blurred the line, is that when the political representation in the ministries became aware of the allegations and the bad behaviour that was demonstrated, the government took action right away. The political representation responded. This government has been very clear that what happened in the contracting around the ArriveCAN app and GC Strategies, which spanned, by the way, the Harper government and also the last Liberal administration, was absolutely problematic. We have to separate those two things. We have to recognize that the government has responded to the Auditor General's report, has condemned the way in which this procurement happened and is taking active steps.

I continue to hear the Conservatives ask when taxpayers will recover the money they feel, of course, and the House recognizes, was problematic in this procurement process. What they seem to forget is that this is a country of law and order. There is due process. What has been very clear from the Minister of Government Transformation in question period is that there is an ongoing legal process. The government has provided the information to the RCMP in relation to whether or not there could be criminal charges moved forward on the individuals who were involved with GC Strategies. The minister acknowledged to this entire House that the government, through the Department of Justice, is actually going through a court process to recover the money that has been fraudulently taken or misappropriated as part of that procurement process.

It is important for Conservative members to recognize that. Their job is to hold a government to account. Their job is to raise these things. I understand that, as do the members on this side. However, their job is not to blur the lines, take 30-second clips, send them home without any context and suggest that somehow the political representation of this government was involved in any way in the

malfeasance that we have seen from the procurement process within the Government of Canada. I would expect my hon. colleagues to conduct themselves in this place with the level of respect and integrity I think is befitting and is the responsibility of parliamentarians and make sure that line is corrected and shown nuance. Of course, they should push and ask the government what steps are being taken, but it is important to recognize that the Auditor General, in her second report, provided no further recommendation other than to continue and that the government is taking the steps in the first Auditor General's report.

Let us get a few things clear for everyone at home. The government is taking GC Strategies, its membership and its directors to court to recover the money the government ought to be able to recover. It is not just by decree that should happen; there is actually a legal judicial process for that to happen and move forward, and the government is following that.

In relation to the seven-year ban on anyone involved with GC Strategies, there is an organization called the office of supplier integrity and compliance. This is built within government processes so that government itself does not determine what that ban should be. Therefore, an independent, arm's-length review process of government has determined that it be seven years.

● (1530)

We can all have a view on whether that should be higher or lower. I think many of us would say at least that, if not more. My personal view is that, yes, it should go higher. Again, there is an independent process for the government to absolutely weigh in. The Conservatives are not showing that level of nuance in their argument here today. It is important to be able to distinguish between those things.

Back to law and order, again, the Conservative Party, for the longest time, would have put law and order as one of the foundational cores of what the party stands for. We were here on Parliament Hill a few years ago when we got into the challenge around the trucker convoy and people who were frustrated with government policy. I have no problem, by the way, with people who are frustrated with government policy, but when law enforcement authorities are asking people to clear streets, as we saw in Ottawa, and the Conservative Party, instead of standing up for the rule of law and saying it understands that people are frustrated with government policy, and that it understands that people want to move forward—

**Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I can assure my colleague that the Conservative Party had no position on that debacle at that point in time. He should retract that comment and make sure that he is actually giving a speech that actually speaks to Canadians and not just to his own followers for a clip.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I will ask colleagues to remain on topic. I do provide some latitude.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, I see it as absolutely on topic, because we are talking about the way the Conservative Party today is litigating its argument on the opposition day, and it is suggesting things that the government should do that do not follow judicial process. I make the natural step to say I have seen over the last two or three years a slipping of that foundational principle by Conservative members of Parliament in understanding the rule of law in this country and how parliamentarians ought to be making sure that we follow it.

Now, my hon. colleague from Calgary Centre, for whom I have great respect and who does tremendous work on behalf of his constituents, talks about the Conservative position. Mr. Poilievre has pictures standing with the truckers saying, “We think this is great”. There were members of Parliament from the Conservative Party who absolutely were supporting it. Instead of saying that they understood people might be frustrated with the government's position, but respectfully, they had to follow the advice and the authority of legal authorities and police in this country, the Conservatives said, “No, no, let us go out and actually actively promote it”.

That is why small-c conservatives in Kings—Hants and across this country were abandoning the Conservative Party and coming to the Liberal Party. We won. We are on this side. We formed government, so at the end of the day, my message to the Conservative Party and my colleagues on that side is that they ought to listen to some of the small-c conservative base, the progressive conservative tradition, and actually make sure that they do not go towards some of the politics that we are seeing elsewhere in the world, which I think are farther and farther right.

We have to maintain the tradition of law and order in this country. The Conservative Party used to stand for that. Sadly, I am not seeing much of it anymore on that side. This is ultimately an opposition day motion around procurement. The government, again, as I have made abundantly clear to my colleagues in this House, is taking the steps that the Auditor General has recommended to a T. We are going through with a legal process to be able to recover the money, what is available and what will be available in that process through GC Strategies and its affiliates.

The government has taken the advice of the independent organization that determines bans on federal contracts. Again, it is seven years. Could it be higher? Certainly it could, and I think members on this side would agree, but again, it is not for the government to say, because there is an independent process on that.

The idea that the Liberal government and the elected officials on this side had anything to do with this is a fallacy. The idea that the government is not taking action to recover the money is a fallacy.

### *Business of Supply*

The idea that this government does not take this issue seriously and is not actively taking the steps that have been put forth before this House, and before many parliamentary committees, is absolute fallacy. It is not true.

Again, for the integrity of this House, members of Parliament need to make sure that they are cognizant of this when they raise these issues. When we blur these lines, this is where the level of mistrust and hate is fomented, because someone sits at home and listens to Conservative members stand up in this House and talk about Liberal government corruption. It is not true, and that is the problem.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, of course they are going to heckle from the other side, but they are playing into a dangerous game. They should say that they take notice and are upset about the way the procurement process happened and that they want the government to take more action, but to suggest in any way that the elected officials of this government were involved in this is an absolute problem.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kody Blois:** This is the problem, Mr. Speaker. They do not like the truth. The truth hurts with regard to what happened three years ago in relation to not following law and order. There are some members on that side, by the way, who come from the public sector prosecution office; they come from law enforcement. That party should absolutely be about those principles. but the Conservatives are falling into this trap.

Again, they could hold the government to account once the allegations were found by the Auditor General about what the political representation was doing, but they should not blur the lines. It is dangerous rhetoric in this country. It is not helpful, and it actually does not even reflect the true reality of what the government is doing to resolve the situation.

I do want to take my time. I want to take the opportunity. This is about procurement. We have a secretary of state now, explicitly for defence procurement. While we are talking about procurement and defence, it is important to recognize what the Prime Minister and this government announced this week, which is a commitment to get to 2% of GDP defence spending, as per NATO guidelines, by the end of this fiscal year, and I think that this is extremely important. I would hope that all members of this House agree that this is good public policy.

● (1535)

We heard that the Bloc, for example, during debate earlier this week, actually supported this concept. The Conservatives have talked about this for a long time. I would like to see a little more enthusiasm from their benches about the fact that this is good public policy because, to be honest, consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments did not take this question seriously enough. Our Prime Minister is taking this question seriously. This government is taking this question seriously.

### *Business of Supply*

Here is the thing that is often forgotten. The Conservative Party, when it was leaving office in 2015, had defence spending below 1% of GDP. The Conservative opposition members stand up in this House, and I give them credit because they should be raising issues of the Canadian Armed Forces, as it is important across the board, but they forget that they did not leave the cupboard very full when they left government, did they? Every single year since 2015, the Liberal government has increased defence spending on an actual GDP percentage basis, and now we are going to be able to get to 2%. We should be celebrating that. There may have to be more investment. NATO is now looking at a target of perhaps 3.5% of GDP. This is important, but we do have to get procurement right.

There are lessons to be learned, whether it is with this opposition day motion, about government efficiency and the way government operates and procures. It has to be faster, and it has to be more agile. We have to be able to get results with the way the government is spending. Those things are important. This government is also committed to balancing the operational budget within three years.

We hear the Conservatives stand up and rail on about fiscal discipline. I believe in the importance of that. I am glad that they are raising this and that there is an accountability function. However, what they forget is that they just ran on a platform to have well over \$120 billion of deficit spending. Pardon me when I sit here in this House and listen to the Conservatives' narrative talking about government spending and not recognizing that.

Whether it is the Canadian Armed Forces, additional investment in housing or building the major projects that have to get done and catalyzing private investment, we are in a moment when, particularly on the capital side of government investment, we have to continue to invest to drive our economy forward, to reduce our reliance on the United States and to find other trade markets and other economic opportunities. That level of nuance in the debate is never actually highlighted from the opposition benches, and that is what is, in my mind, so frustrating moving forward.

Again, the Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has a really important job, which is to make sure that the investments the government is putting forward result in material difference on the ground. I have a number of Canadian Armed Forces bases in my riding, 14 Wing Greenwood being one that I would certainly like to recognize. I thank the honourable members of the Canadian air force and the Canadian Armed Forces who are located there. They do tremendous work.

We have to be able to scale up. I had the opportunity to talk to the local base commander and the mayor from the municipality of Kings county this week, very briefly, about the way we can work on partnerships to build more housing for the Canadian Armed Forces, but also more housing for the general community in Greenwood and in Kingston. That is extremely important. It matters for the broader community, and it matters for CAF members. The investment that the government is making and committing to this week is going to help support those types of concepts. We also have to make sure that we increase pay to our Canadian Armed Forces members to protect retention and ensure a very strong force moving forward. This is something that all members of Parliament, regardless of partisan affiliation, should be willing to support. It is a crucial moment for the country.

I think I have recognized in my speech that the issues being raised by the opposition are serious and that they require some level of due diligence, which has happened over the course of the entire year, but we have big, major issues before the country that we have to tackle. It is a bit surprising to me that the opposition has used today's opposition motion when the government is in court with GC Strategies, when the government does have a process to try to recoup money from GC Strategies and when there are processes and recommendations being followed from the Auditor General. I listened to many hours of Conservative debate, and none of that is being recognized.

We have major national projects to build in this country. We have a one Canadian economy bill and defence spending. Those are the issues that Canadians want us to be focused on. I would invite the Conservatives to join us on the real issues that matter before us here today.

• (1540)

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kings—Hants for an entertaining 20 minutes. I give him points for providing more fiction per minute than even the member for Winnipeg North, but he did it without yelling and screaming.

I could spend 20 minutes on detailing some of these things, but I want to bring to light a few of them before I ask the member a question. One is that the member brought up the difference between the public sector and the government, but we actually heard testimony that the minister of public safety at the time, Marco Mendicino, did interfere with the case after it came to light.

We hear the member saying that it is before the courts, but earlier today one of his colleagues, another parliamentary secretary, stood and said that it is not before the courts, because they have to discuss this with their lawyers first.

Why did the government continue to grant contracts to GC Strategies for a full two years after the corruption came to light?

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, while I respect my colleague from Edmonton West and I am glad he enjoyed the remarks today, I wish he did not feel as though they were all fiction. Again, that plays into a narrative that I do not think is particularly helpful on that side of the way.

What is very clear is that the government has a legal process to recover the money that the Conservatives are saying needs to be recovered, and this side of the House agrees. There has been a process all the way through. The member made the assertion that Liberal ministers were involved in that, which is problematic. This was an issue at the core of the federal public service with the way in which procurement was handled. It happened under the Harper government, which the member was part of, and it happened over the last number of years. It should never have happened. We agree with that.

As soon as the allegation came to light, the government took actions for recourse and a reset to make sure the issues were addressed, as per the recommendations of the Auditor General. That is the key element that people need to take away from this.

• (1545)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments regarding the Conservative agenda. The election was on April 28. Not once did I hear, at the thousands of doors that I knocked on, anyone raise this issue. However, I heard continuously, every day, about the issue of the Canadian economy, Donald Trump, tariffs and trade. People wanted to see that issue dealt with. Our Prime Minister actually made very strong statements in regard to it, and we are focused on the issue. This is a priority issue that is coming out of the election.

Can the member point out or emphasize the contrast between the Prime Minister of Canada and what we are focused on, compared to Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives, which is really highlighted by today's—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Winnipeg North really got to the essence of what I was talking about.

The issue around procurement and improving processes is an important one, but the opposition day motion today blurs the lines in terms of the way the Conservatives have litigated this argument, which does not show any level of nuance. It does not recognize that the government has taken steps.

I think that if the member for Winnipeg North, and many members of Parliament, went back and surveyed constituents right now, the issue would be around the Canada-U.S. relationship. It is around Canada's economy. It is about how we build one Canadian economy and get major projects built. That is the focus of this government. This government is working quickly to make the changes that Canadians want to see. The Prime Minister has shown tremendous leadership. We have an opportunity to continue that on the G7 stage next week.

We are going to continue to stay focused on the things Canadians care about.

**Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the parliamentary secretary's speech. The issue I want to raise here is his characterization of the Auditor General's lack of any further recommendations. I heard the parliamentary secretary say that, as well as other Liberal members. They seem to be suggesting that because there are no further recommendations, everything is fine. I think that is a non sequitur. It does not follow that because the Auditor General did not make any further recommendations, everything is fine. In fact, the complete opposite is the case. If members had listened to the Auditor General's press conference, she said that an audit is supposed to find only a few errors. In fact, she said that in all of the contracts she looked at, there were errors. She could not make recommendations here because there were errors everywhere.

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If we want to build things in this country, we have to get procurement right. If the government is doing all these things to go after GC Strategies, will it do just one more thing, which is agree with the House and pass our motion?

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member picked up on a few things. Yes, the government agrees that this was an absolute abuse of the procurement process and that the federal civil servants who were responsible for this did not do their due diligence on behalf of the country.

When this became abundantly clear to this government, per the Auditor General's reports, we worked on every single recommendation. We had representatives from GC Strategies, who were admonished before the bar of this House. There have been parliamentary committees. At every single turn, this government, when it became clear that this was a problem, sought to address it. There is a process under way to legally claim the money that ought to be returned to taxpayers.

The Conservatives are choosing to burn a day on this, instead of talking about other major issues. Procurement does have to be addressed. We are working on that across the board, and that is why we are going to be able to stay focused on the big things in the days ahead.

**Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke a lot about the mandate that the Canadian people have given his government. One of the things the Prime Minister ran on was the idea of “elbows up”, fighting back against Donald Trump and the illegal tariffs that he has put on Canada. However, we have now learned that they are texting, they are buddies and they are sending messages back and forth. They are agreeing on some ridiculous Golden Dome that will cost Canadians \$61 billion. That does not appear to me to be something that Canadians did in fact vote for. It does not appear to be very “elbows up”, either.

I wonder if the member could talk about the fact that what Canadians voted for is definitely not what they are getting with the Prime Minister and the government.

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member suggesting that the Prime Minister of this country should not be engaging with the President of the United States? Obviously we take issue with the illegal and unjustified tariffs that have been put on Canadian industry. The Canadian people just elected the Prime Minister. It was a referendum on which party and which leader is best to handle the nuance and the difficulty of this situation on the continental relationship. I find it absolutely unbelievable that the member for Edmonton Strathcona would suggest that the Prime Minister should not be engaging with the U.S. President on the pathway forward.

We are going to be there to protect Canadian jobs and Canadian sectors, and our Prime Minister is going to engage to make sure we can find—

• (1550)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. chief government whip.

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**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to what the parliamentary secretary was talking about earlier, specifically how Conservatives like to take issues like this and try to suggest that there are corrupt politicians at the heart of it. It significantly takes away from the seriousness of the issue.

What I find most alarming is that I have watched Conservatives do this for three years straight, if not longer, thinking that that would be the success for Pierre Poilievre, but it led to nothing. It did not produce the result that the Conservatives wanted, yet they come right back into this House and start up with the exact same games that they left off with in December, as though they have learned nothing.

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, the chief government whip is correct to highlight that fact. As I said throughout my entire remarks, this was a serious issue, a breach of the way in which the federal public service handled procurement. This was a problematic issue. However, the problem is that when we hear the Conservatives speak, they make it sound as though the elected officials who were in these ministerial portfolios were actively involved. That is a complete fallacy. It is untrue. It is dangerous. When the allegations were raised to the political level through the Auditor General's report, the government took action.

However, this is the stuff that we see clipped on X and on social media. There is no context. Gaslighting is an issue that we hear a lot about on this side, but the Conservatives are the best at it. It is not helpful to democratic processes here in this House.

[Translation]

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the 2025 election campaign, the Bloc Québécois proposed reducing spending on the public service and external consultants by \$21 million over five years. The Liberal government is also proposing to cut spending on outside consultants, which is a good thing.

However, what we do not understand is that the main estimates provide for an 8% increase in spending, while the supplementary estimates (A) still provide for \$9.3 billion in new spending.

Is the government also proposing to cut revenues without introducing a new budget?

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, the 8% increase in government spending is due to the measures proposed in the motion that we studied and that the hon. member voted in favour of. This motion includes a tax cut, a GST rebate for first-time homebuyers and spending related to the removal of the carbon tax.

We will be tabling a budget in the fall, and it will show the effectiveness of government spending.

[English]

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

In Hamilton, when someone is hired, if they do not do a job, they do not get paid. It is that simple. It is how we were raised, with fair-

ness, accountability and respect for honest, hard-working people. If they do the job, they earn their pay.

Here in Ottawa, the Liberals paid \$64 million to GC Strategies, a two-man company that was run in a basement that did not even do the work. It subcontracted everything, and the Auditor General said that in many cases, there was no proof that any work was done at all, just invoices, excuses and a total lack of accountability. No one would get away with that in Hamilton, not a chance, so why should Liberal insiders?

Prime Minister Trudeau and his government were warned, not once but repeatedly, by internal reports and concerned civil servants. Public servants testified they had the power to recover the money. Instead, what did they do? They kept signing contracts. They kept the gravy train running for their friends. These are the same civil servants the member on the other side just blamed.

This is the same GC strategies that is now under RCMP investigation, a company cloaked in secrecy with deep ties to Liberal insiders. It is the same GC strategies whose founder had his house raided by the police. Still, 31 different government departments handed it over \$64 million. What was it for?

The Auditor General reviewed a sample of the contracts. What did she find? In nearly half the cases, departments paid GC Strategies without checking if the work was done. In over 80% of the contracts, they could not even prove they got a fair deal. In 46% of the contracts, they did not even prove they received the work before paying the bill.

If someone tried handing out public money with no receipts, no oversight and no proof of work in Hamilton, they would not just be shown the door; they would be dragged into court facing fraud charges, and the community would be demanding answers. Here in Ottawa, they get a handshake, a renewed contract and another cheque with seven figures on it. It is not just negligence; it is institutionalized corruption. The rules are different for Liberal insiders, and Canadians are paying the price.

In my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, families are doing everything right. They are working overtime and pinching every dollar just trying to stay afloat. Food prices are up, rent is sky high and mortgages are crushing families. Every extra dollar counts. While Hamiltonians are cutting back, the Liberals are writing blank cheques to their buddies. That is not just bad government; it is broken government. It is upside down.



This is not an isolated issue, and it is certainly not a paperwork mistake. It is a pattern. The Prime Minister has built a government where insiders get rich and Canadians get left behind. Remember what he said, that he would spend less, but this year's spending bill is 8% bigger than Trudeau's last one. That is over a half a trillion dollars with no budget and no plan. It is just more money for consultants, to the tune of \$26 billion. That is \$1,400 from every Canadian household. Where will the money go? It will not go to building homes and hospitals or to defence spending. It will go into padded contracts for Liberal insiders, padded invoices for middlemen and padded bonuses at CMHC, with millions paid and nothing delivered.

Hamilton gets none of that benefit but all of the bill, so when the Liberals tell Canadians to tighten their belts, pay their carbon tax and wait for help, it is an insult. They are not governing; they are cashing in. It is no wonder Canadians are frustrated. They see a government that pushes work and rewards waste. They see a government that lets friends walk away with millions while working people get squeezed.

During the election, I met a woman named Alexa while I was out door knocking in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Alexa is a single mother of three young boys and works overtime as a public service worker. She is doing everything right, showing up, working hard and raising her family, but she told me how hard it is becoming just to put food on the table. Living paycheque to paycheque, Alexa said she has had to make impossible choices among rent, groceries and gas. The dream of raising her kids in a good neighbourhood and providing a decent life feels more out of reach every passing month.

• (1555)

We talked about the skyrocketing cost of living, and now a decade of Liberal waste and mismanagement has made things worse. That day, I made a promise, and not just to Alexa, but to every family like hers across Hamilton and across the country. I promised that I would come to Ottawa to fight to make life more affordable, to put money back in their pockets and to stand up to the insiders and the waste so that families like Alexa's are not left behind.

That is who this is about. It is about Alexa. It is about the people doing everything right and getting nothing back. When they see the government hand out \$64 million to a company that did not even do the work while they are scraping together dollars for their kids' lunches, it is not just frustrating; it is infuriating. Enough is enough.

Today, the Conservatives are demanding two things. First, we should get taxpayers' money back, \$64 million, recovered within 100 days. If Hamilton families have to live on a budget, the government should also. Second, we should ban GC Strategies and its founders from ever getting another federal contract. This includes all of their shell companies, subsidiaries and spinoffs. They cashed in on Canadians; they should not get a second chance.

Let me be clear. This is not about politics. It is about trust. It is about fairness. It is about respecting the people who sent us here to represent them. Right now, that trust is broken. We have a government that paid a company to do work it did not do, a company that is now under RCMP investigation and a company that has been ex-

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posed by the Auditor General, and the Liberals want to move on like nothing has happened. We will not let that happen, not on our watch, not in this House. I came to Ottawa to represent Hamilton, and in Hamilton we hold people accountable. We do not tolerate waste, we do not reward failure and we do not let people get rich by ripping off taxpayers.

This motion is simple. It gives the government a clear chance to show Canadians that it is serious about cleaning up the mess: no more talk, no more spin, just action. It should recover the money, ban the contractors and stand up for taxpayers.

If Hamiltonians cannot skip the bill when they do not get service, neither should Liberal insiders. When someone cuts corners, they do not get a raise; they get the door. When government insiders get caught abusing public trust, they should not get a slap on the wrist; they should be banned for life.

Let me remind the House that we have seen this before, with the sponsorship scandal, the WE scandal and the McKinsey contracts. It is always the same. It is about Liberal-connected firms and Liberal insiders, while regular Canadians pay the price. It is the same movie over and over, and Canadians are tired of it. This time we are drawing the line.

To every hard-working Canadian out there, the nurses pulling overtime, the truck drivers paying high fuel costs and the steelworkers putting in double shifts, I want them to know that someone is finally fighting for their dollar. We are here to say we have seen enough waste, enough favours and enough payouts. Let us get taxpayers' money back.

Every member of the House has a choice. They can stand up with Canadians or stand up with consultants; stand up for accountability or stand up for corruption. It is time for action now.

• (1600)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one would think the member opposite was not even listening to the previous speech. He referenced Liberal insiders and friends on several occasions. If we want to talk about misinformation, Mr. Firth received contracts when Stephen Harper was the prime minister.

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The member tries to give a false impression that there is some sort of direct link to Liberal insiders receiving money, when in fact it is just not true. Members opposite should know that, but that does not feed into the gaslighting my friend made reference to. He wants to give the false impression that there was something the Government of Canada did wrong or that politicians did wrong.

Does the member have any sense of guilt for trying to advance misinformation and gaslighting—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

**Ned Kuruc:** Mr. Speaker, do I have any sense of guilt? Hon. members on that side of the House blame Pierre, blame the convoy and blame the Conservatives. They blame everybody but themselves. If they want to say it is a new government, why not start by getting the \$64 million back? That is all we are asking for, to get the \$64 million back.

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard government members say again and again today that they are not responsible. It is true the Liberal government is not a responsible government, but the buck ultimately stops with ministers in the government. It is called ministerial responsibility. Instead, the Liberals, even though they have been in office for 10 years and millions went out the door to GC Strategies under their watch, throw the public service under the bus and then wash their hands clean.

I would be interested in what the member has to say to that.

• (1605)

**Ned Kuruc:** It is simple, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we want to get to the bottom of things. We want this scandal investigated from start to finish, and we are simply asking whether the Liberals will get the \$64 million of taxpayer money back.

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member listened to my speech. He heard very clearly that there is a judicial process and that the government is moving on legal action to recover the taxpayer dollars we agree need to be recovered.

The member suggests there are Liberal insiders. The member for Winnipeg North made the distinction that the elected members of the Privy Council, when they became aware of this, addressed and sought to address the issue. The problem is at the procurement level of civil servants, and when we listen to the Conservative speeches, they blend the two. It is absolutely problematic.

The member for Winnipeg North suggested and rightly highlighted that GC strategies received money under the Conservative government. Will the member stand up and suggest that they were Conservative insiders too, or will he recognize there is a difference between the civil service, the processes and the political elected representation who is taking action?

**Ned Kuruc:** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that \$64 million was awarded to two guys in a basement who did not do the work, and today we are here asking for the money back.

Government members can kick the can and can blame civil service. I listened for 16 minutes, and the member kicked the can and

passed the buck to everybody but excused himself. The taxpayers want their \$64 million money back.

I am an elected official and my voice is being heard here today on behalf of my citizens. They want their money back.

**Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we have discussed that the Auditor General gave a scathing report on GC Strategies. In question period, we heard, I believe, 15 or 16 direct questions about whether the Liberal government would get our money back. There was not a single answer to that question. It is a very simple yes-or-no question.

I am wondering if my colleague could address why he thinks the Liberals are so scared to get our money back.

**Ned Kuruc:** Mr. Speaker, the so-called new government can turn over a new leaf by getting the \$64 million back. It is very simple. They should get the \$64 million back. They need to stop kicking the can around and blaming everybody but themselves. It is simple—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order. The time has expired.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to our Conservative motion calling on the Liberal government to get taxpayers their money back in the face of the latest chapter in the ArriveCAN, better known as arrive scam, saga. Arrive scam is emblematic of widespread corruption, mismanagement, abuse and incompetence that defines 10 years of the Liberals.

Arrive scam involves an app that did not work. It was supposed to cost \$80,000. It turns out it cost taxpayers \$60 million, 750 times greater than the initial projected cost, all, again, for an app that did not work. There is well-documented evidence that throughout the development of the app, there was widespread misconduct and mismanagement across multiple government departments and agencies. For example, the Auditor General found that there was a glaring disregard for basic management and contracting practices. So bad were things, that the Auditor General indicated she had never seen poorer record-keeping in all of her years undertaking audits.

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As bad as that is, arguably what is worse is what the procurement ombudsman found: that 76% of contractors involved in arrive scam did no work; no work was done, but yet money went out the door. At the centre of arrive scam is the now infamous firm GC Strategies, the largest contractor. GC Strategies is a two-person basement firm that did no work, that offered no services, that has no expertise, and yet walked away like a bandit with \$20 million of taxpayer money. The only thing GC Strategies is capable of is bidding for government contracts, getting the contracts, fleecing the taxpayer with 15% and 30% commissions and then subcontracting out the work.

It is a firm that is under RCMP investigation, as we speak, for fraud in relation to contracts with the Government of Canada. As alarming and outrageous as it is, GC Strategies walked away with \$20 million in taxpayer money for arrive scam. We learned on Tuesday that this only scratches the surface, because on Tuesday, the Auditor General issued another report, another audit, with respect to contracts involving GC Strategies and the Government of Canada. What the Auditor General found was that GC Strategies received millions more taxpayer dollars for no work.

Let us look at some of the particulars of the findings of the Auditor General. The Auditor General went back to 2015, basically when the Liberal government came to office. That is when GC Strategies started getting contracts, 106 in total, the value of which was \$94.7 million, and \$64.5 million was ultimately paid out. The Auditor General put aside the four arrive scam contracts because they had already been audited, and she looked at the 102 remaining contracts. She took a sample of 35 of those contracts across 21 federal departments and organizations, and what she found was that of the 35 sampled non-arrive scam contracts, 46% involved contracts in which there was no proof of work.

• (1610)

The Auditor General's findings in respect of these contracts was that there was "little to no evidence...that deliverables were received", so there we have arrive scam 2.0: no controls, no oversight, and millions upon millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars improperly going out the door under the watch of the Liberals, and they have the audacity today to stand in this place and wash their hands clean of any responsibility. It is an absolute disgrace.

There is no doubt that is the most damning aspect of the Auditor General's findings; what could be worse than getting paid and doing no work, to the tune of millions of dollars? However, I do want to note that there were other damning findings in the report. One example is the total absence or near total absence of oversight when it comes to seeing value for money with respect to at least non-competitive contracts, of which millions went out the door to GC Strategies, based upon the sample.

With respect to those non-competitive contracts, the Auditor General found that, in 95% of the cases, government departments could not establish evidence of value for money. In fully 82% of the contracts, departments could not provide any evidence that fees charged did not exceed market rates. In 13% of the contracts, there was evidence, but guess what the evidence was. It was an attestation from the supplier, GC Strategies.

Here we have GC Strategies getting paid millions of dollars, being awarded contracts, and when it comes to value for money, government departments took GC Strategies at its word that it was providing services at or below market rates. One cannot make this stuff up, but it is par for the course after 10 years of the Liberals' over-seeing procurement and government contracting.

Then there was the finding of the Auditor General that, in 33% of the contracts, departments could not demonstrate that contract resources had experience or qualifications to complete the work. I guess it is not a surprise, though, given that everything involving GC Strategies involves no work, with \$20 million for arrive scam and millions more on the non-arrive scam contracts.

It would be comforting if one were to say, "Well, as bad as this is, it's an isolated incident", but of course that is not the case. After all, the audit involves 35 contracts across 21 departments and federal organizations, so it cannot be said that it was one department or a handful of rogue bureaucrats. We have also seen other instances of this type of abuse involving other contractors under the Liberal government's watch, such as McKinsey.

However, putting that aside, members do not have to take my word for it in terms of the degree to which this is a systematic problem; they can take the word of the Auditor General, who said in the media, "I have no reason to believe that the lack of following the rules is linked to a specific vendor. This is really about the public service". It is really about a systematic problem within the Liberal government, after 10 years. It is a damning indictment by the Auditor General.

In the face of that, now that we have the Auditor General's report, now that we have learned the extent of the abuse of taxpayer dollars, taxpayers deserve their money back, and they deserve their money back now. That is why we have put forward the motion: so that the House can order the government to immediately commence proceedings to do just that, to get taxpayers their money back and to make taxpayers whole again in the face of this outrageous abuse, this outrageous corruption, all under the government's watch.

• (1615)

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate for the people who are sitting in the public gallery or who may be watching at home, because the opposition clearly has not delineated the facts on a few things, and one is that there is a process. The motion before us talks about 100 days. My question to the hon. member is this: Does he suggest that there should not be a court process, that if GC Strategies or its associates choose to defend the allegations in court that the government should just find a way to railroad that process?

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The government is actually under a process to recover the money. It is following the Auditor General's steps the entire way. The situation was rooted in the federal public service. It was a problematic procurement. The government is taking accountability, it is taking actions, and it is seeking to recover the taxpayers' dollars.

However, when the Conservatives were in government, they awarded contracts to GC Strategies. I hope that the member will make the distinction that this was rooted at the federal core and that we are getting the money back for Canadian citizens, but maybe not in 100 days, because there is due process in this country.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, to say that this was “a problematic procurement” is the understatement of the year. We are talking about 76% of contractors who got paid but did no work. The House, 16 months ago, ordered the government to recover all of the stolen money, not just from GC Strategies but also from the other contractors. It is now 16 months later, and I would challenge the member to prove me otherwise, but I believe that not a single cent has been recovered. With respect to proceedings that have been commenced, I would ask the hon. member or a member across the way to cite where the action has been filed, for what amount, and who are the parties who are named.

• (1620)

[Translation]

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

In his opinion, did the previous government, like the current one, make every effort to recover the amounts that were wrongfully billed to it and, by extension, to taxpayers? Does my colleague believe that the government is doing everything necessary to identify the public service officials who failed to exercise vigilance and diligence in overseeing these contracts?

Does he think that more needs to be done? Can he explain this to us?

[English]

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. I do not believe that we see evidence of accountability for those who engaged in wrongdoing. While it is important to see that those responsible for shovelling money out the door without seeing proof of work are fired, there also has to be responsibility on the part of ministers under whose watch tens of millions of dollars went out the door to GC Strategies and other contractors without proof of work. Thus far, the only response from the Liberals is that they are not responsible and that there is nothing to see here. There is plenty to see, and it is pretty ugly.

**Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, we heard from the Auditor General's report that there was massive abuse with GC Strategies' getting paid for work that they never did. I know that my hon. colleague has a strong legal background. What is it called when people submit an invoice and get paid for work that they never did?

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, when someone submits a receipt and gets paid for work that they did not do, which is exactly what GC Strategies did, it is called fraud. That is what happened under

the government's watch: \$20 million for the arrive scam and millions more on non-arrive scam contracts. It is scandalous. It is criminal.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the member could just provide his thoughts. Does he believe in a due process that would allow the courts and the civil service to do their job?

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, we have seen no meaningful action taken on the part of the Liberals to get the money back. All we have seen, in fact, is the government's thumbing its nose at the will of the House of Commons, which ordered the government to recover all of the millions of dollars.

As far as any proceedings go, no member on the other side of the aisle can cite the lawsuit, the amount sought and the parties named when—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

**Tim Louis (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Kitchener—Conestoga. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Bourassa.

For any government, there is perhaps no more central responsibility than the duty to spend taxpayer dollars with transparency and a clear commitment to achieving value for money. Canadians work hard to earn a living, and part of those earnings comes to Parliament, where through debate, consultation and consensus, we decide how that money should be spent. It is a critical task, and one that no government should take lightly.

One of the many things that governments budget for is professional services. The decision to acquire professional services through contracting is made by departments based on requirements and deliverables needed to execute their mandates. This may include specialized skills and expertise, which are sought through procurements. Contracting for services has long been a regular part of how government operates, and professional services as a percentage of total government expenditures have not grown. This practice is typically followed to provide additional support to federal employees working on important projects and programs.

In the Auditor General's report, the most recent study of professional service contracts with GC Strategies Inc., the Auditor General of Canada highlighted gaps in documentation and other necessary controls. Her assessment, in general terms, is that while Canada's system for the procurement of professional services has ample and suitable guidelines in place, those rules only work when they are followed.

The government fully accepts the findings of the Auditor General in this report, and I thank her for doing that work, as it was done following prior audits on the same issues. I can report to the House that several measures have been put in place over the last 18 months to address the underlying causes that allowed this particular situation to occur, so I will talk about the action that we have already taken.

Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC as I will call it, is a department that oversees procurement in conjunction with client departments and agencies. PSPC has addressed the recommendations raised in audit reports in an effort to strengthen procurement. It has improved evaluation requirements to ensure that resources are appropriately qualified, and it has increased transparency requirements from suppliers around their pricing and their use of subcontractors.

It has improved documentation when awarding contracts and issuing task authorizations, and it has clarified work requirements and activities, including the requirement to specify which initiatives and projects are being worked on by contractors. It is increasing its use of solution-based procurement approaches rather than time- and task-based approaches. It is also streamlining, simplifying and digitizing existing mandatory procurement instruments, as well as requiring additional approvals for the use of mandatory procurement instruments.

Perhaps most importantly, PSPC is raising awareness of procurement risks and activities across federal departments and agencies. This is an issue that can affect any department, big or small, across Canada. It is vital that public servants involved in the procurement process are aware of their responsibilities and are all making informed decisions in accordance with the established rules.

As a control measure, PSPC plays an important challenge function in situations where a client department decides to pursue a non-competitive procurement process. In those situations, PSPC suggests alternative procurement approaches to client departments when it believes that non-competitive procurement is not the optimal option.

As such, in November 2023, following the re-evaluation of the improper contract negotiations with GC Strategies, PSPC wrote to the government departments and agencies to inform them that it would be replacing all master-level user arrangements with client departments, agencies and Crown corporations. These arrangements set out conditions for access to select professional services methods of supply maintained by PSPC.

As part of this process, PSPC and client departments have established new arrangements, which stipulate the use of new contract provisions to increase costing and subcontractor transparency.

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These new arrangements were circulated to the departments at the end of January, on January 31, 2024, and they are now in force.

• (1625)

The more recent measure, having just come into force this month, is the implementation of part 18 of the Budget Implementation Act, which gives the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement exclusive authority over federal procurement. It is not an end to delegation; on the contrary, departments and agencies will continue to exercise the authority to conduct their own procurements.

However, the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement can now revoke a department's or agency's delegation if there is reason to believe the procurement rules are not being followed. More broadly, as circumstances dictate, the minister can mandate standard procurement processes across all federal departments and agencies.

To conclude, I would like to note that GC Strategies has been determined to be ineligible under PSPC's ineligibility and suspension policy. It will not see a dime of taxpayer monies for the next seven years. This company is responsible for what has happened, and we are pursuing GC Strategies in court. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore systemic issues inside government that permitted wrongdoing, however unintentional.

The Auditor General has made her recommendations on the necessary course of action, and PSPC has, over the past year and a half, taken many steps to strengthen the oversight on all professional services and contracts falling under PSPC's authority. This government will never tolerate misconduct from suppliers or their contractors. GC Strategies has been banned, its security clearance has been revoked, legal action has been taken, and we referred the case to the RCMP. We are also strengthening procurement oversight and accountability across departments.

I believe it is time. Canadians have sent us here to get work done. I look forward to questions and to working together.

• (1630)

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think part of the issue that we are seeing with the debate today, with Liberal members giving their speeches, is that there seems to be a bit of a refusal to acknowledge that a pattern has existed with scandal within government.

We know Justin Trudeau had multiple ethics reports with his name on them. The minister from Beauséjour has a couple; he made headlines a few times for some very notable slip-ups and conflicts. We have the former minister of international trade. She had some shortcomings on the ethics side.

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There are many instances. It is not like the government failures were just one little problem here. There seems to be a constant lack of accountability. We see ministers, even members of the Liberal Party, get up and say they cannot blame the minister. Well, no, ministerial accountability is an important piece.

Would the member not agree that if ministers were actually accountable for their departments, a lot of this would not have happened?

**Tim Louis:** Mr. Speaker, we have talked about strengthening accountability, and I think that is what is happening. Government should be in a role of constant improvement, and strengthening accountability is something that we are doing. We are strengthening the oversight, which has already happened, and we are clarifying responsibilities, which is a big part of that, by taking legal action against GC Strategies, going after the money it has, revoking its security clearance and also referring the case to the RCMP.

I know more work needs to be done, but I believe we are taking those necessary steps, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the back and forth today, it feels like I caught my daughter with her hands in the cookie jar and I am hearing her trying to make excuses for emptying it. It feels like that is what the government is doing right now. They are trying to clear their conscience while those who were in the former government are still here.

I will pick up on the question that my Conservative colleague asked about a disturbing trend. I replaced one of my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates a year or two ago. At the committee, I asked questions about the government's increasing use of outside consultants, because the media had published a figure about it. Using outside consultants costs more and is subject to fewer rules, less oversight and less accountability.

When I asked my question, the government responded that the reason was a lack of expertise in the public service. I would like my colleague to explain this lack of vision to me. Why were outside consultants being used with the excuse given that there was a lack of expertise—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker:** I must interrupt the hon. member because I must give the parliamentary secretary time to answer the question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

**Tim Louis:** Mr. Speaker, the member is passionate and very knowledgeable about this subject. She mentioned the OGGO committee. I have never had the privilege to sit on that committee. The committees are important. They are part of the oversight for government, and they play an integral part. We need to continue to work together, whether it is in this chamber or in committee.

I also want to thank the Auditor General, because when Auditor Generals do those reports and give recommendations, it does hold us accountable as government. If there are improvements to be made, we will continue to make them.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, April 28 was election day. I cannot recall one individual in the entire constituency of Winnipeg North who actually raised this issue that the Conservatives want to spend an entire day debating. We have been talking about what I believe our voters were telling us. They want us to deal with the issues of Donald Trump, tariffs and trade.

Constituents are pleased to see that the Prime Minister has actually met with the premiers, building one Canadian economy. This is what I was hearing at the door. Contrast that to Pierre Poilievre and what the Conservatives want us to debate today. Could the hon. member provide his thoughts on the Conservatives not having their priorities right?

• (1635)

**Tim Louis:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right; Canadians sent us here to address affordability issues and to make life better for Canadians.

We have legislation before us that, if we work together, we can pass quickly. That would help 22 million Canadians with a tax cut, and it would help with the GST rebate. I look forward to working across the aisle as fast as possible to make sure that we can do what Canadians sent us here to do.

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to explain that our government implemented border measures in early 2020 in response to widespread and growing concern in the international community about reports of a new virus identified in China. This was followed by an unprecedented international response to the pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we took a comprehensive and layered approach to border management in a rapidly evolving and highly dynamic environment. This included frequently adapting measures based on available data, operational considerations and scientific evidence, while monitoring the epidemiological situation and the capacity to respond to the pandemic, both in Canada and abroad.

The ArriveCAN solution was launched in April 2020 to facilitate the digital submission of the mandatory public health information that was required of travellers entering Canada. ArriveCAN evolved in step with public health measures at the border to protect Canadians and to limit the importation of the virus and the spread of COVID-19. Most of all, it was an effort to limit pressure on Canada's health care system. Lastly, it was also an effort to support the resumption of travel. ArriveCAN is a tool that helped facilitate the reopening of our borders, which was essential for Canadian businesses and the national economy.

Let us now talk about how this solution contributed to public health. The introduction of this mandatory system, known as ArriveCAN, was cited by the Auditor General in her December 2021 report as an important factor in improving data quality and, consequently, the Public Health Agency of Canada's ability to promote, review and enforce COVID-19 border measures.

It is important to note that the data was very important in guiding the government in the direction it should take and in the decisions that should be made by public health officials. More specifically, ArriveCAN enabled the Government of Canada to implement, add, adjust and remove important public health measures, especially at the border. As the pandemic evolved, the situation was, of course, taken into account. As I said, the data from ArriveCAN guided those decisions.

When the app was launched, Canada was recording more than 1,200 COVID-19-related deaths per week. Public health measures at the border helped protect Canadians and limit the importation and spread of COVID-19. These measures also helped ease significant pressure on the Canadian health care system. Data collected through ArriveCAN played a critical role in developing public health advice. It enabled the federal government to monitor, assess and respond to COVID-19 as it evolved.

More specifically, ArriveCAN was an important tool in implementing the border testing program, which was essential in identifying and monitoring the importation of variants of concern from high-risk countries. For example, when the omicron variant was identified in late 2021, data from ArriveCAN was used to identify recent arrivals from countries where omicron was widespread, to facilitate compliance verification and enforcement activities related to border measures and to protect travellers and border control officers by reducing points of contact.

The solution gave all travellers, regardless of their mode of transportation, a digital means of providing the required information in accordance with emergency orders made under the Quarantine Act. This digital solution also made it possible to collect, collate and analyze the information more quickly and efficiently than the initial paper-based process so that traveller health information could be shared with the provinces and territories in a timely manner or in real-time for contact tracing purposes.

As I explained earlier, the app had value for public health, but also for the resumption of international travel and for our economy. It played a vital role in protecting Canadians from the spread of the virus in our country and allowed the economy to reopen within our economic system. In March 2020, all international commercial passenger flights were funnelled to four major airports: Montreal,

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Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. The availability and use of ArriveCAN were essential to enable the government to resume international commercial passenger flights at other airports starting in August 2021, with full resumption across Canada by the end of February 2022.

• (1640)

As a result of this solution, the number of travellers entering Canada by air increased regularly, going from roughly 1,000 travellers a day in May 2020, to between 30,000 and 50,000 travellers a day in January 2023, and roughly 1.5 million travellers a month thereafter. ArriveCAN really helped to reduce the processing time required by border services officers to support the resumption of international travel.

In conclusion, all the COVID-19-related border measures were lifted on October 1, 2022, including the requirement for travellers entering Canada to submit their public health information using the ArriveCAN app or web site. The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique set of challenges and a need for government intervention and support that had not been seen in more than a generation. In an increasingly interconnected world, many lessons have been learned from this experience and are being integrated into pandemic preparation and response plans, which will help the government adjust its operations, if necessary, and remain well positioned and prepared to respond to future global health events.

[English]

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at the public accounts committee, we heard the assistant deputy minister testify that the government was actually not going after cases of fraud to recover money, only asking for the money back, saying it was open to negotiations with companies that were defrauding taxpayers through procurement policy.

I wonder if the colleague across the way could explain why the government is so lenient with companies that are stealing taxpayers' money.

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I really want to put on the record that the government has not turned a blind eye and has acted very responsibly. The government has already taken concrete action to address the concerns raised. An investigation has been launched by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, and we are co-operating fully with the authorities to get to the bottom of this matter. The government has also launched a review of our contract management practices to strengthen oversight mechanisms and ensure that every public dollar is spent wisely.

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**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a story with my colleague. It is the story of Jean-Claude Martin and Gaétane Cyr, both residents of Baie-des-Chaleurs. I represented them as their legal aid lawyer. When they started living together, they filed a tax return as a couple. To get their guaranteed income supplement, they simply called and explained their situation to a public servant, without filling in any forms, since none had been sent to them.

A few years later, the federal government suddenly woke up and decided to send my two low-income clients a letter demanding \$38,000. It is not hard to imagine the stress they were under. We disputed this demand and asked the government to forgive the debt since it had been notified of the situation previously. We took the matter all the way to Federal Court and lost. At the time, I asked Minister Duclos to step in and cancel the debt. That never happened.

How can we be sure that no double standard will creep in and that the people who cheated the government, or at best behaved badly, will also have to face legal proceedings in this case?

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely true, whether in this case or any other case where people find that administrative processes take a really long time or genuinely harm their financial situation.

I would just like to come back to the subject to say one thing. What matters to this government in terms of administrative processes is integrating AI and making Canadians our primary concern.

I would also like to remind everyone here that, rather than turning this into a partisan wedge issue, our responsibility as members of Parliament is to strengthen public confidence and put our trust in our public servants and in our system. This is the message we need to send to Canadians.

● (1645)

[English]

**Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we agree fully and wholeheartedly with the Auditor General, who states that we do not need more rules; we need to ensure the rules and frameworks are in place and followed by public servants.

I would like to hear your thoughts on how we do that, given that the processes are in place and we just need to follow them.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I would remind members to direct their questions through the Chair.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Bourassa has the floor.

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important that our government remain committed to strengthening the mechanism of integrity in public administration. We need to work together across party lines, in a non-partisan way, to make sure that something like this never happens again. It is very important that this issue be addressed in a non-partisan way and that it not be politicized.

[English]

**Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Windsor West.

One of our primary duties as members of His Majesty's loyal opposition is to hold the federal government to account. Although the new Prime Minister wishes to reset the clock as if this were a new Liberal government, the reality is the team around him is made up of the same old scandal-plagued, tired Liberals, who are carry-overs from the previous era of Liberal incompetence.

Canada continues to face several challenges. There is a housing crisis, there is a crime crisis, there is a fentanyl crisis, there is a federal spending and debt crisis, and there are many more. Today Conservatives are here to speak about how the government wastefully spent taxpayer money on a project for which it did not even confirm if the work was completed. Those are not our words. That is the recent finding of the Auditor General when it came to the federal contracting of ArriveCAN, which inspired this headline in The Globe and Mail on June 10: "ArriveCAN's main contractor GC-Strategies paid without ensuring work was done".

Although ArriveCAN was a Trudeau-era creation, its fallout is now the current Liberal government's problem. That is why I am here this afternoon. It is to take part in speaking to our common-sense Conservative motion, which states:

That, given that the Auditor General found that ArriveCAN contractor, GC-Strategies Inc., was paid \$64 million from the Liberal government, and in many cases, there was no proof that any work was completed, the House call on the government to:

(a) get taxpayers their money back, within 100 days of the adoption of this motion; and

(b) impose a lifetime contracting ban on GCStrategies Inc., any of its subsidiaries, its founders Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, and any other entities with which those individuals are affiliated.

Truly, it is the least the Liberal government can do. Let me explain.

The impacts of the disastrous ArriveCAN app are still fresh in the minds of my constituents. The city of Niagara Falls and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake are tourism communities located along the Canada-U.S. border. We are home to three international bridge crossings that span the Niagara River and connect Canada to the U.S. All three are part of the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. There is the Queenston Lewiston Bridge in Niagara-on-the-Lake and both the Whirlpool Bridge and the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls. Together, these bridges facilitate trade, travel and tourism. They were also on the front lines of the two-year-long ArriveCAN app disaster, from 2020 to 2022.



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When COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake were among the first and hardest hit by the consequences of restrictive government policies intending to preserve public health by slowing the virus's spread. The ArriveCAN app first launched on April 30, 2020, as a digital tool that was developed in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Between November 21, 2020, and September 30, 2022, the mandatory use of ArriveCAN was aimed at ensuring that all travellers to Canada complied with federal travel and border measures relating to COVID-19. In theory, this app was supposed to help limit the spread of the coronavirus, but, in practice, it instantly turned into a disaster. My constituency office was inundated with phone calls and correspondence from constituents and travellers who were experiencing a wide range of issues with the app. Many travellers could not access or use ArriveCAN if they did not have a computer, a cellphone or a data plan. At times, data coverage on the border can be sketchy; travellers can also accidentally incur expensive roaming fees.

Language barriers were also a challenge, and seniors felt disproportionately targeted and discriminated against. The app failed on many occasions, when it glitched or faced other software issues. In fact, this is exactly what happened to Bernadette from my riding, a 75-year-old constituent at the time. Upon arriving in Canada from her trip to the U.S., Bernadette was told she would have to be quarantined for 14 days, despite being double-vaccinated and having a booster. Shortly after returning home, she began receiving threatening phone calls from the Government of Canada, harassing her to complete her testing requirements or face jail time and/or a \$650,000 fine. Bernadette's case was not the only one. In fact, over 10,000 Canadians were wrongly ordered to quarantine as a result of a glitch in the ArriveCAN app.

• (1650)

This glitch created undue and significant emotional stress and impacted people's lives in different ways, whether it was having to give up work shifts, cancel appointments or miss important family events. In addition to the personal impacts that the dysfunctional ArriveCAN app caused people, there is also the economic cost. In March 2023, the international trade committee, which I sat on as a member, published a report on the economic impacts of ArriveCAN. It reads, "The Tourism Industry Association of Canada stated that the mandatory use of ArriveCAN and its requirements had a 'massive effect' on Canada's tourism sector, resulting in 'a drop of 50% or more in the number of Americans coming into the country.'"

Further, the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority characterized the mandatory use of ArriveCAN as a "disincentive" and an "inconvenience" to discretionary travel. We felt these economic impacts in my region of Niagara. As a result of fewer American tourists arriving by auto, the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission experienced a 53% drop in auto crossings in June of 2022, compared to the same month in 2019.

In addition to lower volume, travel essentially came to a halt. The report says, "The Customs and Immigration Union compared the country's land borders to 'parking lots'", as the mandatory use

of the app at the borders caused processing times for all travellers arriving in Canada to skyrocket. As of June 15, 2022, the Customs and Immigration Union observed that CBSA officers were processing 30 cars per hour at the Canadian port of entry, compared to 60 cars per hour in the years preceding the pandemic.

Further, the wait times at the Rainbow Bridge rose from about one half hour during the 2019 Victoria Day weekend to just over two hours during the same weekend in 2022. These delays were felt not only at land borders; airports also experienced the pains and significant bottlenecks. In fact, the National Airlines Council of Canada stated that "following the requirement to use ArriveCAN, processing times for travellers at Canadian ports of entry were 'about five times as long as they were before ArriveCAN'".

In addition to the direct impacts of the app, there were also concerns being raised about why the federal government mandated the use of ArriveCAN for as long as it did. In the report, testimony provided by McMaster University's Dr. Zain Chagla shows he openly "questioned the continued mandatory use of [ArriveCAN] in spring 2022," when some public health measures were being lifted in time to welcome the 2022 summer tourism season, which in Niagara is our peak tourism season.

Despite the measures' having been lifted, the Liberal government kept the mandatory use of ArriveCAN in place until the fall, when it finally made the app optional in October, 2022. This delayed action was a self-inflicted attack, there can be no other word for it, by the federal Liberals against the Canadian tourism industry, and it delayed any hope for a tourism recovery that year.

Although the costs we are discussing today in the motion focus on the GC Strategies contract, the personal and economic costs incurred by Canadians as a result of the broken and dysfunctional ArriveCAN app that was implemented by the reckless and careless Liberals are enormous, perhaps immeasurable, and they are not recoverable.

This is why our Conservative motion makes so much common sense. Getting Canadian taxpayers their money back and protecting Canadians from another arrive scam ever happening again by the same company or its founders is the least the Liberal government can do, and that is why I call on all my colleagues in the House to stand in support of the motion.

• (1655)

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes we seem to have convenient amnesia about the level of emergency the COVID-19 pandemic caused, when governments of all levels were putting in emergency measures to protect Canadians.

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My question to the hon. member is this: Does he agree that the COVID-19 pandemic was the most severe public health emergency of the past century?

**Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this place.

The Auditor General indicated that emergency measures' being put in place does not mean that the government cannot still follow the rules, and it should ensure that it does follow the procurement rules. In this case, it failed to do so, and that was to the detriment of Canadians, not only taxpayers but also the tourism sector in particular, which suffered because of the inept Liberal government.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois supports both main points of the motion. I commend my Conservative colleague for clearly re-explaining why this is important.

Taxpayers should get their money back if no work was done. However, the Auditor General is not necessarily saying that the work was not done, just that at this point, there is no documentation to show that the work was done and delivered. It is clear that some of the work was not done. It remains to be seen what work actually was done.

My question concerns the reference to “within 100 days” in the motion. I would ask my hon. colleague if he does not think it is a little unrealistic to talk about 100 days. Looking at the Liberals' track record, there are some sad examples where they have not been able to recover the money, unfortunately. The sponsorship scandal is a good example.

Is a 100-day deadline really realistic, given the Liberals' track record?

[English]

**Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc for its support for the motion and the upcoming vote on the motion.

What is important is that we have put a timeline on it. What we are asking is for the government to act and to act with a sense of urgency. What I mentioned in my remarks is that this is \$64 million we could actually recover. With respect to the damage the government did through its ArriveCAN app to the tourism economy, those monies are not recoverable. We owe it to the hard-working taxpayers and hard-working individuals in the tourism sector to get that money back for the impacts the arrive scam app had on my community.

**Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what he hears from the people he represents about how they perceive a government that has for a decade imposed inflationary tax and spending policies and that has hiked the costs of all essentials and made life more expensive for all Canadians, while TD also predicts Canada's heading into a recession and 100,000 job losses to come.

What do the member's constituents say about a government that does that to Canadians and then spends and loses \$64 million and hundreds of millions of dollars on insider backroom deal contracts

but will not actually move to get the money back to repay taxpayers?

**Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's comments are absolutely correct. The hard-working people of Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake sit around their kitchen table and plan a budget. They plan for the hardships they have been undertaking because of the government. We are in an affordability crisis. People are pinching their pennies, and yet they see a government that wastefully spent \$64 billion.

On top of that, the government cannot even share with the House a plan, a budget for the future. What it has dropped before us is estimates showing half a trillion dollars in spending, which is 8% up, and yet there is no plan or detail on where those monies, the revenue, is going to come from.

● (1700)

**Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that I stood with my colleague this week as we urged the government to provide honorary citizenship for Jimmy Lai. I appreciate his work on that. It is unfortunate that has not happened yet.

The government has announced huge expenditures in defence spending. One of the things I worry about is that this is ultimately a procurement issue, and I am concerned about whether he trusts the government—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The member for Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake has the floor.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, in a simple word, I do not trust the government. Where is the budget? Again, we get back to the issue of \$9 billion. Where is that money, where is the revenue and how is it to be spent?

**Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I start with the matter at hand, I would like to take a moment to wish one of my constituents a belated happy birthday. Mrs. Winnie Lynn celebrated her 100th birthday on June 10. She is an inspiration to me and to all who know her, including her four sons and many grandchildren, nieces and nephews. As the daughter of an itinerant minister, she travelled across the globe with her family, her father, before she set roots in Windsor in 1947.

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Lynn married a naval officer of the Royal Canadian Navy. Besides raising her sons and being there for her family, friends and neighbours, she volunteered with the Canadian Cancer Society for over 50 years and has consistently worked on improving and helping our community. It is citizens like Mrs. Lynn who are the glue that binds our families and communities together.

Once again, I wish a happy birthday to Mrs. Lynn.

On a sadder note, we all heard the tragic news of the crash of the Air India flight originating from Ahmedabad, India, a city where many of my friends live and where I have flown from before. My heart aches for the families who have lost loved ones. We as Canadians share their grief, as we too lost a citizen in the tragic crash. We will pray for those who are no longer with us and will stand with the families in this painful hour. May the Almighty grant everyone strength and peace.

With respect to the matter at hand, today Canadians are watching to see whether their Parliament can still do the basics—

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, point of order. The interpretation is not working.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I am being told that it is working now.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

[*English*]

**Harb Gill:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the matter at hand, today Canadians are watching to see whether their Parliament can still do the basics: recover their money when it is wasted and protect them from being defrauded by their own government.

I rise today to speak in support of the motion, not just as the member for Windsor West but also as someone who has seen firsthand how Liberal mismanagement harmed our economy, damaged trust at the border and wasted millions of our hard-earned dollars.

The motion calls on the government to do two simple things: one, to get taxpayers their money back within 100 days, and two, impose a lifetime contracting ban on GC Strategies Inc., its subsidiaries and its founders, who are now under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

Let me repeat the headline, because it cannot be said enough: The Liberals need to get the taxpayers their money back.

The Auditor General released one of the most scathing reports in recent memory, a deep dive into how GC Strategies, a so-called IT firm with just two employees and no developers, received over \$64 million in contracts from the Liberal government. GC Strategies did not build software. It did not write code. It subcontracted the work while skimming millions in fees. It was a middleman billing the government while doing virtually nothing itself, and for this, it was rewarded not once, not twice but 106 times across 31 government departments, including Global Affairs, National Defence and even the Department of Justice.

This is not just waste; it is systemic rot. There was no proof of work, no accountability and no consequences. The Auditor General found that in 46% of the contracts, the government had no proof of deliverables being received, yet officials still signed off on the payments. In 33% of the cases, they could not even confirm whether the contractors had the experience to do the job. In over 50% of the cases, contract staff had no security clearance when they began work, even on sensitive projects. The government paid out \$64 million with almost no documentation, no oversight and no explanation.

Let us be clear: GC Strategies was cleared to receive over \$100 million in total. We may have only scratched the surface, so let us see what the RCMP finds out.

What happened when all this came to light? The RCMP raided the home of one of the company's founders, Parliament was misled, border communities like mine were ignored, and yet no one has been held accountable.

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We did get excuses. We got many deflections, and, of course, we got more spending. Windsor West was hit especially hard by the ArriveCAN disaster. We are Canada's busiest border region. We rely on cross-border travel, not just for tourism but also for trade, family, health care and work. ArriveCAN was not just a glitchy app; it was a gatekeeper, and it failed. Seniors and truckers were detained and fined because the app crashed. Seniors who did not have a smart phone were punished with fines or unbelievable delays while crossing. Nurses and doctors were delayed at crossings. American visitors disappeared overnight from our small businesses, and all the while, the Liberals handed out contracts like candy on Canada Day, while telling Canadians it was just a tech issue.

The scandal is about judgment, values and governance, or rather the lack thereof. Canadians, especially in my community, were the ones left holding the bag. We now know, thanks to the Auditor General, that the government had the power to fix this. Public Service and Procurement Canada testified before a committee that, had a fraud occurred, "we have the ability to recover the funds from the suppliers, and it's in our regular practice to do so", so let us do it.

What are we waiting for, a red carpet? Let us recover the money, let us end the excuses, and let us pass the motion, because inaction or delay sends a message that this kind of behaviour is acceptable. Clearly, it is not. I am sure that both sides of the House would agree on that.

Let us also talk about the government's first major spending bill. The Liberals have said that they would spend less. Instead, they brought forward a spending bill that increases total expenditures by 8%, nearly three times the combined rate of inflation and population growth.

● (1705)

Where is the money going? There is \$26.1 billion for consultants. That is \$1,400 per household in Canada handed to insiders and lobbyists, even after the arrive scam mess. That is not about innovation. It is not about investment. It is about a government addicted to outsourcing, with no accountability and no shame.

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Let us turn to the core of this motion. This is not radical. It is not partisan. It is about restoring faith in how our money is spent. The Liberals gave \$64 million to a two-person firm that never delivered and is now being investigated by the RCMP. The Liberals ignored procurement rules, they ignored security rules and they ignored the taxpayer. Now the Liberals want to move on like there is nothing to see here; let us go on. Well, we say not this time. The motion would give them 100 days to act: 100 days to return the money using the very tools that their own departments say already exist and 100 days to ban GC Strategies, its subsidiaries, its founders and any shell company they try to hide behind from ever touching federal dollars again.

Public service is a privilege, as we all know, not a business model. To my colleagues, especially those on the government benches, this is their moment to shine. Are they willing to stand up for their constituents or are they going to protect a pair of contractors who cashed \$64 million in exchange for smoke and mirrors?

To the people of Windsor and the rest of Canada, I say this. We are fighting to get their money back. We are fighting to end the gravy train and demand accountability and responsibility. We are demanding on their behalf that this Parliament finally delivers results, not just reviews.

The Liberals need to get the taxpayers their money back. This House needs to send a clear message that this needs to happen at the end of the motion.

• (1710)

[Translation]

**Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague across the floor, whom I respect deeply. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his speech challenging the government. These things happen when people spend their time criticizing.

After criticizing the ArriveCAN app in a series of flashy media statements, can he now tell us specifically what credible solutions his party would have put in place to protect Canadians at the border?

Are we talking about opposition again—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order. I must give the hon. member time to respond to the question.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

[English]

**Harb Gill:** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. No one is denying the need for swift action during a pandemic, but swift does not mean sloppy. An emergency does not mean being unaccountable. Canadians expect their government to protect public health and use taxpayer money responsibly.

We have now learned that \$64 million went out the door with almost no oversight, and only \$8 million can be properly accounted for. My community was not asking for perfection. We were asking not to be punished for living at the border. What we needed was a functional, transparent system. What we got was a \$60-million glitch.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when we looked at the GC Strategies issue during the last Parliament, I remember us coming to the realization that these firms could easily change names to win other contracts. This is what happened with GC Strategies, which was initially called Coredal Systems Consulting. We realized that it had been hired by the Department of Transport between 2010 and 2015 under the Conservative government.

Governments come and go and seem to repeat the same mistakes. This fuels public cynicism. What can be done today to address this? The solution would obviously be to repay the money, but beyond that, we must also ensure that this does not happen again in the future.

[English]

**Harb Gill:** Mr. Speaker, this is about accountability and responsibility, and that totally rests with the Liberal government at this point. In order to regain trust, we have to show that we are responsible parliamentarians and pass this motion. All the public is seeing is more of the same, which is eroding trust in public institutions, in us as parliamentarians and in anybody who works for the government. Nobody out there believes us or anything we say. We have to mean what we say and hold people accountable, or else we will not have much of a democracy left anymore because we are going to get scam after scam. This is not acceptable.

The member's point is absolutely true. A lot of these agencies or companies start off with new names, and we just say, "Okay, it is good to go."

**Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Windsor West. He is not only a colleague, but a riding neighbour.

Much of what my colleague spoke about affects my riding as well. I appreciated that he said it would be really difficult for him to meet his constituents and say that we do not need to fight for \$64 million.

What kind of money would go toward projects if we continue to fight for this?

• (1715)

**Harb Gill:** Mr. Speaker, the City of Windsor is still owed \$1 million from the convoy issues that went on there. The Liberal government has not paid it. Some of the money that would be recovered from this enterprise would go to the City of Windsor to refill its coffers, because this is money it has already spent.

**Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga Centre.

On behalf of the residents of my great constituency of Davenport, which is located in downtown Toronto, I am very pleased to join the debate on this opposition day motion about ArriveCAN contractor GC Strategies. It is truly an important matter for us to discuss.

Effective management in government procurement is a fundamental responsibility to Canadians. Every dollar spent by the government must reflect a commitment to transparency, accountability and value for money. Robust procurement practices ensure that taxpayer funds are used wisely. The practices must cultivate trust and deliver essential services to benefit communities. This is precisely what our government strives to achieve. We can always improve the way we work. If and when concerns are raised, we listen to them and we act.

That brings me to the audit tabled by the Office of the Auditor General on Tuesday regarding professional services contracts awarded to GC Strategies. I want to thank the Auditor General and her team for their hard work on this audit.

I can tell hon. members that public servants are committed to improving procurement practices. It is important for members to remember that the Office of Supplier Integrity and Compliance has declared GC Strategies ineligible from being awarded Government of Canada contracts for seven years, specifically from June 6, 2025, until June 6, 2032. This is a severe sanction. It reflects the seriousness of the misconduct of the supplier in its dealings with the federal government.

The Government of Canada has accepted all of the recommendations previously made by the Auditor General. In her most recent report, she made no new recommendations, but she urged the government to continue to implement previous recommendations, which is currently under way. I will go through some of the efforts that are happening right now.

Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, is in the process of transforming and modernizing how the department procures professional services by simplifying existing mandatory procurement tools. To date, the department has taken the following actions on previous recommendations from the Auditor General: improving evaluation requirements to ensure that resources are appropriately qualified; ensuring increased transparency from suppliers around their pricing and use of subcontractors; improving documentation when awarding contracts and issuing task authorizations; and finally, clarifying work requirements and activities and specifying which initiatives and projects are being worked on by contractors.

All these measures are meant to strengthen the integrity of the procurement system. They are meant to improve data collection. They are meant to increase transparency in procurement decisions. They are meant to clarify roles and responsibilities. Most of all, they are meant to strengthen oversight and accountability in procurement activities.

The Government of Canada has also taken steps to hold GC Strategies accountable. With regard to ArriveCAN, where specific allegations of misconduct have been made, the CBSA has launched an investigation that is still in process and has referred all allegations to the RCMP. The CBSA has already taken steps to strengthen

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the management and oversight of its work. One of these steps is to implement a procurement improvement plan. Anyone can see this plan on the CBSA website. The plan ensures that all CBSA procurement follows Government of Canada contracting rules, supports the agency's mandate and provides value for Canadians.

In addition, the CBSA has put in place an executive procurement review committee to approve contracts. This committee oversees contracts worth up to \$1 million. Contracts larger than \$1 million must receive approval from the agency's executive committee, which is made up of senior CBSA leaders. The plan also calls for employees with financial authority to stay up to date with mandatory procurement training, and all employees must disclose interactions with potential vendors. The CBSA has taken many other internal steps, including creating a branch dedicated to monitoring management activities and building a culture of service and program delivery excellence, including in procurement activities.

● (1720)

In recent years, the CBSA has been subject to several audits and reviews that covered procurement, including an internal audit of contracting and procurement. These projects resulted in 25 recommendations. As of June 2025, the agency has implemented 21 of them, with the remaining four in progress.

The government takes these matters very seriously. From the beginning, Public Services and Procurement Canada acted swiftly in response to the allegations against the company. In February 2024, GC Strategies was suspended from participating in procurement practices, including standing offers and supply arrangements. It was also barred from participating in new procurement opportunities undertaken by Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Furthermore, in March 2024, the security status of GC Strategies Inc. was suspended. At that time, PSPC informed the RCMP of its initial concerns related to some procurement irregularities. GC Strategies was declared ineligible pursuant to the ineligibility and suspension policy. This means that, as of June 6, 2025, GC Strategies is disqualified from receiving Government of Canada contracts for seven years, ending on June 6, 2032. This period is justified, based on the severity and the duration of the misconduct, as well as the significant impact on the federal procurement system. Our government has also launched legal action against GC Strategies to recoup payments made for work that was not completed.

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I believe all of this illustrates how our government is committed to establishing and improving sound contract and procurement practices. Our new government believes that misconduct of any kind is completely unacceptable. In the last Parliament, parliamentarians, the Auditor General, multiple parliamentary committees and others undertook extensive work to examine and hold to account those who were found to have acted inappropriately.

With new safeguards in place, and serious action being taken to hold GC Strategies accountable, it is time for us to move forward and focus on the work ahead of us. I am thankful for the opportunity to have my say on behalf of the residents of my great riding of Davenport on this important debate that we are having today.

**Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, but I have heard this speech several times today. It seems to be an excuse mechanism on why we do not need to deal with this as forcefully as we should.

This was \$65 million of taxpayers' money that disappeared to a group, which was previously at the bar of the House of Commons. I remember, at that point in time, the Liberal Party across the way was trying to make excuses for why those people did not have to appear here, because they were under stress and might cry if they had to come before the House of Commons. This was a cover-up of the highest order to make sure there was no accountability, and this accountability has not been borne all the way through. These people have to be held to account. We have to get that \$65 million back.

We have responsible government in this country. Does the member understand that responsible government means that somebody has to take accountability for the \$65 million that was taken from taxpayers?

• (1725)

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has heard numerous speeches today. He might have to hear a few more speeches because we are reiterating, in the absolute strongest terms, that misconduct of any kind in the procurement process is never acceptable.

Absolutely, we have taken action. We have taken action directly against GC Strategies. We have revoked the security clearance of GC Strategies. We have terminated all contracts with GC Strategies. We have barred GC Strategies from future contracts with the Government of Canada. We have taken, and are taking, legal action against GC Strategies. On top of that, we are improving our overall procurement process. We are taking action.

[Translation]

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today because it is a special day. It is June 12, “Quebec Buy Local Day”. Today is Quebec's first-ever buy local day and I am proud to take the floor and showcase my earrings. They were made by a creator in my riding, Verretuose. That was an aside to tell people to buy local.

Now, I have a question for my colleague, who is a very conscientious, thorough and hard-working member of Parliament. I listened to her speech, but there is one thing that caught my attention. If the

scandal surrounding the ArriveCAN app had never come to light, if no one had leaked the information, we might never have known that the government and taxpayers were being robbed by companies that were taking advantage of the government's generosity and their close ties with the public service.

Can my colleague tell me whether she agrees and whether she thinks her government is doing enough to find the guilty parties to make them pay and to ensure that we are reimbursed?

[English]

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that we should always be shopping locally. As someone who lived in Quebec for four years, I am very fond of the great businesses there, and I think it is great that she shared with us today that she had bought something local from Quebec.

On just procurement and best practices, this is why we have an Auditor General. There are a number of oversight measures that we have in place in our government to ensure that, when things are not working, we try to root out the problem, and then, when we realize that things are not going well or things have gone badly, we take immediate action to correct it. That is what we—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2024, the Auditor General of Canada came forward and provided eight recommendations. Out of those eight recommendations, seven have been fully implemented. The eighth recommendation is well under way.

If we fast-forward to today, we now have the Auditor General, in essence, saying that we have the rules in place, but we need to ensure that there is public sector involvement in making sure that the rules are properly followed.

I look at the broader issue. We just finished the election. There are all sorts of things on Canadians' minds, and the Conservatives have chosen this as the issue of priority, according to Pierre Poilievre. Can the member provide her thoughts on that?

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I was reading a few things, so I am not sure if I heard the question correctly.

I will say to the hon. member that our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that federal procurement is always conducted in an open, fair and transparent manner, and that we, at no point, will ever accept misconduct of any kind. We will constantly be improving our procurement process.

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to first take a moment to express my deepest condolences to all victims of the Air India tragedy. I want to notably offer my condolences to Dr. Patel, a member of our Mississauga community. To all those mourning this heartbreaking loss, our community grieves with them.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to address the important motion put forward by the opposition.

First, I would like to echo the words of my colleagues here in the House that the government welcomes the Auditor General's findings in her report on professional services contracts and is committed to procuring professional services in a fair, open and transparent manner.

Let us be clear. This is not the first audit or investigation into the procurement of professional services, generally, or into GC Strategies, in particular. The government, and certainly the House, is well aware of the wholly unacceptable past issues that have been uncovered through these reports and investigations, and those bad actors have been held to account.

The latest report from the Auditor General addressed contracts awarded and payments made to GC Strategies and other companies incorporated by its co-founders. These contracts, which were awarded by numerous departments and agencies, did not provide value for money. That is not acceptable to all of us here who work to serve Canadians collectively.

I will note that the Auditor General's report did not make any new recommendations for the government when it comes to the procurement of professional services. The government is in complete agreement with the Auditor General when she encourages federal organizations to implement the recommendations from recent procurement audits.

Allow me to assure the House that, when these concerns were first discovered, this government took action to make sure unacceptable practices do not occur again. It put in place a number of measures to improve the oversight of federal procurement, including of professional services. The reason there are no new recommendations is because we have taken action, and continue to take action, to address earlier findings.

This motion is simply another round of political games by the opposition. Canadians elected our new government to move forward with an ambitious agenda, including tackling crime, strengthening the border and making life more affordable. I suggest that the opposition should also be focused on those things.

Moving on, the government is in agreement with the Auditor General that this is not about creating new rules and regulations, but about making sure that rules are followed and frameworks are adhered to so that we are providing the best value for money for Canadians. The rules are there. They must be followed. This government has taken action to make sure that happens. We are enhancing the evaluation requirements so that we can make sure the individuals who will be doing the work are properly qualified for the job. We know it is essential to have a clear line of sight on the work that is being done on behalf of hard-working Canadians to be sure we are getting the best value for money. That is why we now

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require suppliers to show greater transparency when it comes to their prices, as well as providing clear information on any subcontractors they may be using.

We are also improving our own documentation when awarding contracts and authorizing tasks. We are adding greater precision when specifying and documenting what needs to be done, as well as what projects and tasks contractors are working on.

As mentioned, the Auditor General took a close look at a number of contracts with GC Strategies. As my colleagues have stated, in March of last year, the company's security status was revoked, meaning it became ineligible for all federal procurement that had a security requirement. It was also removed from the Public Services and Procurement Canada's procurement instruments. Just last week, following a thorough assessment of the supplier's conduct, the office of supplier integrity and compliance deemed GC Strategies ineligible for any contracts or real property agreements with the Government of Canada for seven years. If the company were indeed convicted of fraud against the Crown in court, the company could lose its capacity to contract with it permanently.

When it comes to recovering funds that we have identified as fraudulent billing or overbilling, we are pursuing GC Strategies in court right now.

This new government will not let up when it comes to taking action to strengthen the integrity of the procurement process and making sure we are not conducting business with buyers of concern. It has a renewed focus on making government work better, and this work is very much part of that commitment.

It is essential that we make sure that the government is not only working more efficiently, but following the rules. Following the rules leads to efficiency, which means savings for Canadians. It means getting the very best value for money for Canadians.

More needs to be done to transform how government operates right across the board. That is why we have a new Minister of Government Transformation. To build the kind of Canada we need now, we must change the way we deliver for Canadians. This means not only improving productivity, but also focusing on maintaining service delivery standards. That will require us to look at new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to change the way we manage many of our processes.

● (1730)

Right now, the government is transforming and modernizing how the federal government procures professional services by streamlining and simplifying existing mandatory procurement mechanisms. This modernization is in lockstep with our commitment to integrity as the work includes reducing risks in our buying processes, improving how we manage contracts and doing more to promote solution-based procurement approaches that ensure we are getting the best value for Canadians.

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We are continuing to improve the procurement system to make sure that errors such as those reported by the Auditor General can not happen again. This new government is committed to delivering for Canadians. I implore the opposition to end the political games and focus on the mission at hand, which is to build Canada strong.

• (1735)

**Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under this new government, under this new Prime Minister, consultant spending is up to \$26 billion. It is up 37% or about \$1,400 for each Canadian family. I am wondering if the member opposite can tell Canadians that he thinks it is value for money, while it is rising, and that spending \$1,400 on consultants is good value for their money, especially those who are in line at food banks.

**Fares Al Soud:** Mr. Speaker, as this is only my second time rising in this House, I will take a moment to once again thank my constituents out in Mississauga Centre for putting their trust in me.

This past election, I heard from constituents day in, day out about a lot of issues and about their biggest priorities, things like affordability, health care and public safety. I also heard a lot about the confidence they have in this government to deliver. We are on the same page. This is problematic, which is exactly why we are acting, only we are doing it within the perimeters of the law. The way our government has responded—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj.

[Translation]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, earlier, I was telling the story of a law-abiding couple who made an honest mistake and yet were pursued relentlessly by the federal government. They still need to pay back that debt, so some clarity is in order regarding the legal action the government says it wants to take against GC Strategies.

Has a notice been sent? I might remind members that we have been waiting for this for over a year. Have negotiations begun? If not, has an application been filed in court?

[English]

**Fares Al Soud:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to ArriveCAN, where specific allegations of misconduct have been made, CBSA has launched an investigation that is still in process and has referred allegations to the RCMP.

Additionally, on March 15, 2024, Public Services and Procurement Canada terminated all contracts and supply arrangements awarded to GC Strategies and suspended its security clearances, rendering GC Strategies ineligible to participate in Public Services and Procurement tenders.

In June, the office of supplier integrity and compliance, OSIC, issued a seven-year ban on GC Strategies participating in government contracts. The OSIC process is independent and free from political interference. We will ensure that we hold all who break the law accountable.

**Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to offer my condolences on the loss of the member's community member. We are all with him.

Like many people in this House, I have a legal background. I know that when we encounter contractual disputes there is a clear legal process for parties who violate contracts, for parties who are bad-faith actors in contracts and even for parties who commit fraud.

Would my colleague like to comment on the importance of due process and the legal process that the government should follow in recovering losses and damages and in seeking a remedy?

**Fares Al Soud:** Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my dear colleague for the very kind words and the condolences provided.

I completely agree. Due process is a fundamental part of the system in which we operate. It is extremely important to bear in mind that earlier today we heard from the opposition that they are committed to fighting government overreach, yet while we stand here willing and committed to fight for the system that very much defines what we are as a country, they have a problem with it.

We are committed to continuing to do things in the way that we have, because we know it is the right way to serve Canadians.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is new to the chamber, but perhaps he needs to reflect on the last 10 years of waste, corruption and scandal that he is now a part of. He talks about welcoming the Auditor General's report into the arrive scam issue, but he also needs to remember that, with regard to the first report that she gave, they opposed the inquest by the Auditor General in her report.

The question is very simple. We have heard all kinds of mixed messages about the status of litigation against GC Strategies. If the government has taken GC Strategies to court to recover monies on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer, when was the suit filed, how much is it for and where was it filed?

• (1740)

**Fares Al Soud:** Mr. Speaker, the truth is, we did hear from constituents and we did hear from Canadians this past election about the work that our government has been doing. Here we stand, re-elected as government, because Canadians have faith in the work that we will continue to do.

In addressing this question, I will reiterate that our government is committed to following due process, and we will do exactly that to deliver for Canadians.



**William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

As a chartered professional accountant, now the proud representative of Yellowhead, I rise today to speak in opposition to the government's blatant mismanagement and disregard for taxpayer money, specifically relating to the shocking findings concerning GC Strategies and the ArriveCAN contracts.

The Auditor General's report revealed that GC Strategies, a contractor for the ArriveCAN app, was paid an astonishing \$64 million by the Liberal government. However, in many cases, there was no proof that any work was even completed. This is not just a minor administrative hiccup; it is a fundamental failure of oversight, responsibility and transparency. It is a betrayal of Canadians' trust and abuse of public funds.

Accountability is non-negotiable. When public funds are wasted, taxpayers suffer. I spent 26 years as a chartered professional accountant ensuring that every dollar was tracked, justified and accounted for. Governments should be held to the same standard, if not a higher one. What we see here is a government that appears to have turned a blind eye to due diligence.

How could a contract that was originally supposed to be worth \$80,000 turn into tens of millions of dollars being paid out without clear evidence of work being completed? It was done without proper security clearances and without going through the proper bidding processes. Where were the checks and balances?

The Auditor General's report paints a picture of complacency or worse, wilful neglect. Canadians deserve better. They deserve transparency, accountability and a government that can manage its own spending. The Liberal government has already proven itself incapable of that task.

The motion calls on the government to get taxpayers their money back within 100 days. I would argue it is just the first step. The government must commit not only to recovering these funds but also to continuing to conduct full and public audits of contracts awarded from today onward and going back during the pandemic. The misuse of funds here is not an isolated incident.

The motion also calls for a lifetime contracting ban on GC Strategies, its subsidiaries, its founders Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, and all affiliated entities. I support this wholeheartedly. The government has an obligation to protect taxpayers from repeat offenders, entities and individuals who have proven themselves untrustworthy and have abused public funds.

A lifetime ban would send a strong message that this behaviour will not be tolerated. Moreover, it would protect contractors who operate and interact with our federal procurement system with integrity from being undercut by companies that engage in such reckless practices. Public contracting must be a level playing field built on trust, performance and accountability.

Throughout the speeches today, I have heard members from the other side consistently say they will implement previous recommendations for better rules to make processes more transparent and accountable. I see two problems with that. First, the Auditor General's

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al's recommendations have been around for a few years. What is taking the Liberals so long to implement the plan?

Second, the Auditor General states there do not need to be any new recommendations. The government seems to be taking that as it does not have to start something new to follow the recommendations. The problem is that there are rules, but the government is not following them. All the government has to do to avoid a scandal is simply follow the rules.

There should not have been any shortcuts to fast-track funds to Liberal insiders. It seems that the government did not follow its own rules when it came to GC Strategies. Is anyone in the Liberal government going to be responsible for its mismanagement? Is the reason for the lawsuit against GC Strategies that the government can deflect its responsibility?

As a CPA, I had to deal with the CRA on a weekly basis. Sometimes we had agents who were experienced and knew what they were doing. Often, we would get agents who were relatively new and inexperienced. Sometimes that was an issue, but most often, CRA staff were required to follow a checklist. If someone did not fill in the details required, they would not go any further.

Those staff would say we could not continue without checking all the boxes, or the CRA employees would say without proof of someone's expenses, those individuals were guilty of putting the onus on taxpayers. There should be no difference in the procurement process. Vendors should prove they have done the work.

As a new MP, I am learning I cannot ever make assumptions that the Liberal government and departments will follow the rules and the checklist. This is a bit hypocritical when it comes to the government demanding Canadians follow the rules and punishing them if they do not.

● (1745)

When it comes to the Liberal government, when it is caught doing things wrong there are no consequences. As an MP from Alberta, a province that often feels ignored or sidelined by federal decisions, I want to stress the gravity of the issue for my constituents.

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Albertans are hard-working people. They pay their taxes diligently and often in greater amounts relative to the other provinces, only to see their money squandered by a government that lacks fiscal discipline. Over and over again, Albertans get the short end of the stick when it comes to federal funding. This only highlights the countless ways the Liberal government has, time and time again, irresponsibly wasted taxpayer money.

As a CPA, I saw first-hand how a business could be destroyed by poor fiscal management. The same principle should apply to the government. Tax dollars are not unlimited; they represent the hard work of Canadians. When funds are wasted, it means fewer resources for other areas, such as health care, infrastructure and education.

The Auditor General's findings are alarming and unacceptable. Taxpayers deserve to have their money returned swiftly and fully. It is unacceptable that it has not yet happened, and it needs to be a priority of the House.

This scandal underscores a much larger problem of the government's mismanagement and lack of accountability. When Canadians hear that millions of tax dollars have been handed out with no proof of work done, it confirms their opinions that governments waste their tax money. People begin to question whether their voices matter, whether their hard work is respected and whether their government truly serves them or just serves special interests.

Rebuilding that trust is a long and difficult process. It requires not only ensuring the money is returned and punishing those responsible but also changing the culture within government. It requires shifting away from complacency and secrecy to transparency, accountability and respect for the taxpayer.

As a new Conservative MP, I also want to emphasize the critical role Parliament must play going forward. Holding the government to account is not simply an opposition duty; it is a duty to every Canadian. It is our responsibility to shine a light on mismanagement and to ensure that public money is spent wisely and for public good. This means we must strengthen parliamentary committees, empower the Auditor General with better resources and more independence, and demand timely responses from ministers when failures are uncovered. This is not about political point scoring; it is about restoring integrity to our democratic institutions.

Lastly, I want to remind the House that the stakes for Alberta are especially high. Our province has been hit by economic uncertainty from energy sector challenges, inflation and cost of living pressures. Every dollar wasted by the federal government is a dollar that could be invested in Alberta's infrastructure, health care and programs to support Albertans. Albertans are watching, Canadians are watching, and they are demanding action. They want a government that respects their contributions and uses public funds responsibly. They want a government that confidently says where public funds were spent and on what. Canadians across the country demand and deserve responsible government and responsible spending.

The Auditor General's report regarding GC Strategies is a wake-up call. It exposes serious flaws in the ways that government contracts are awarded and managed that cost Canadians millions and

undermine faith in public institutions. I stand with this motion because taxpayers deserve to be repaid. The Liberal government must implement strict measures, including a lifetime ban on those responsible, to prevent this from ever happening again. I urge all members of the House to support this motion and send a strong message that the waste and mismanagement must end now.

● (1750)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned a couple of things that I think are of importance. He talked about the fact that they want to send a strong message. I am curious to know what the member thinks about the fact that Canadians just sent a strong message to the entire country by re-electing the Liberal government to make sure that we continue to work for Canadians on things such as housing, child care benefits and dental care benefits, which I am sure many people in his riding have also benefited from.

Can the member comment on whether he is going to support the mandate that Canadians sent to this House to make sure that we can deliver on one Canadian economy, not 13?

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, the decision by the electorate on April 28 gave us a minority government, so there was not a strong mandate for the government on that end of it. The constituents in my riding sent a pretty strong message, with over 69% of them saying they were very much in favour of the—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I am going to ask the member to pause momentarily.

I ask the hon. member to keep his earpiece and any electronic devices away from the microphone. I will let him conclude his response.

**William Stevenson:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, my constituents were very much onside with the opposition here, and we want to send a strong message to make sure the last 10 years of fiscal mismanagement are corrected. We hope the government will follow suit in the next little while.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government use of contractors and overspending problem is nothing new. It is even a growing problem. After all, the Auditor General mentions \$18 million being paid to private companies for IT services.

Quebec is currently holding a public inquiry on the SAAQclic infiasco. This project went about \$500 million over budget. When we compare the two situations, we see that Ottawa can go billions over budget and no one says a word. There is a motion on the floor today, but we need to remember that Ottawa provides hardly any services itself, aside from passports, which it has a hard time delivering.

Rather than having Ottawa invest more and more and take Canadians to the cleaners, what does the member think of the idea of Ottawa tackling the fiscal imbalance and sending money and taxes in to the coffers—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Yellowhead has the floor.

[English]

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, from our end, this is a beginning. This is in regard to one aspect of where the government mismanaged its spending in the past. We know this recent spending means the Liberals are going to have an extra \$26 billion in contractors. We cannot continue with that without some better oversight. As we have said before, we need a budget to actually look at some of that spending. We all need to look further at all the government's spending.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard nothing all day today about any steps the government plans on taking for getting the money back. We have heard nothing but comments about gamesmanship or that we should be looking at other issues. Government members seem to forget that the official opposition has a constitutional mandate to hold the government to account.

In light of the explosive AG report released on Tuesday, a damning indictment against this particular government, perhaps my colleague can better explain why it was important to bring this particular motion forward today.

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, timing seems to be everything. The Liberal government tried to get ahead of it. It announced Friday, just before it was going to be caught with its pants down, that it would be banning GC Strategies, but it probably already had advance notice of what it would be doing. Dealing with GC Strategies needed to be brought forward right now. This is one of the audit reports. It was only one of nine. There are a lot of other damning issues that we need to address, but this is just the beginning. It is a start with regard to that one audit report.

• (1755)

[Translation]

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise on behalf of all the Canadians who are feeling increasingly skeptical, disappointed and disillusioned with politics across the country. Scandals like the one raised by the Auditor General of Canada are good examples that fuel this feeling of discouragement. ArriveCAN, or “arrive scam”, as many call it, is a government program that was mismanaged. It is a perfect example of wasted public funds, favouritism and profound disrespect for people who work hard to earn a living, pay their mortgage, pay for groceries and transportation, and who pay their taxes respectfully and in good faith so that Canada can prosper.

What do we really owe them? Let us keep in mind that the purpose of the app was to safeguard national security at a critical time in our recent history. The app was supposed to collect personal information, such as contact information, health status, proof of vaccination and even quarantine plans. The app was also supposed to track mandatory quarantines. It was a system of exchange between the government and our citizens. The app was supposed to speed up

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customs processes and security at our borders, enforce public health policies, limit the transmission of the virus and make it easier for our border officers to do their job. That is a lot. It was also meant to serve as a temporary vaccine passport.

Some will say that there was a crisis, that it was a crucial time, that it was a matter of national security, and that the government should be given a free pass. I will say one thing: If someone's house is on fire and their first instinct is to call their brother-in-law who is a plumber or painter, that means that their instincts are bad and their priorities are out of whack. That is what happened. At a critical time, the government awarded contracts to a two-person company that did not even have the skills to do what was required.

However, Canada has plenty of good, reliable and reputable companies. To name just a few, there is CGI, a great Montreal company with 95,000 employees; OpenText, a Waterloo company with 23,000 employees; and Constellation Software, a Toronto company with 56,000 employees. Perhaps the government wanted to support small businesses. Perhaps that was the objective. Here are a few of those: Cohere, a Toronto company with 300 employees; Appnova, a Vancouver company with 402 employees; and Nexapp, a Quebec company with nearly 100 employees.

However, the government chose that particularly intense and historic moment to do business with a two-person company, a shell company, despite the fact that Canada's contracting policies are extremely clear. There are six easy steps. First, assess needs. What is the goal? Analyze the risks, the options and the budget, which is still a problem, apparently. Next, issue a call for tenders to evaluate the most suitable companies. Once again, there are technical requirements, deadlines and a budget. Officials receive and assess costing, relevance, the company's experience—sorely lacking in this case—capacity for execution and conflicts of interest. Here again, a lot of these pieces were missing. Then, the government awards the contract to the company that offers the greatest benefit for Canadians, not for its cronies. Lastly, the government ensures delivery. It monitors the execution of the contract and pays when the product is delivered. There is no prepayment for something that has not been delivered.

We are not talking about a mistake here. We are talking about a choice to govern with no rigour, respect, technical skills or transparency. They gave \$60 million to a two-person company that did not have the required knowledge, reputation or respect of its peers in its field. It is clear proof of the government's total contempt for Canadians and Canadian families, who were struggling then and are still struggling today with inflated prices thanks to the inflationary policies of the past 10 years.

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We are still hearing excuses today in the House. The Liberals say that they put a stop to all that, and so on. However, this reminds me of an arsonist firefighter who lights fires, puts them out and then pats themselves on the back. Contracts are not awarded by just anyone. They are awarded by the government. It must have known exactly what it was doing. This is reminiscent of other Liberal scandals. Take, for example, the Aga Khan affair, involving the Christmas vacation of our former prime minister, who was ultimately the first Prime Minister to breach federal ethics rules.

• (1800)

There was also the SNC-Lavalin affair. Our former prime minister intervened directly with the Department of Justice to get a deal for a company that had donated money to his election campaign.

Think of the WE Charity scandal, where the Liberals entrusted the management of the Canada student service grant, a \$912-million program, to an organization with ties to the Trudeau family.

Another example from around the same time is the Frank Baylis affair. The former Liberal MP's company secured a \$237-million contract to supply ventilators, which was \$100 million more than the cost of similar equipment available at the time.

Think of ArriveCAN. This app was supposed to help Canadians travel while protecting the population from the potential spread of the virus, but it was a failure. The project was a money pit. More than anything, it became a symbol of gross mismanagement of public funds. The revelations speak for themselves: \$100 million was pre-approved for a company with only two employees; \$59 million was paid without any real traceability; \$20 million was handed over for an app that did not even work; there was no certification process; 46% of the money was paid without any evidence of work being performed.

GC Strategies, a two-person company, received contracts from 31 different departments. It got 106 contracts amounting to \$92.7 million. When it comes to ArriveCAN, 177 versions were released without any prior testing. That resulted in 10,000 travellers being needlessly quarantined. They suffered lost wages and personal stress for no reason at all. Ethical rules were flouted, and the interests of Canadians were not protected.

If we take a closer look at the history, the first contract was for \$2.35 million. I personally contacted firms to see if that made sense. I was told it was far-fetched, but that the first contract was still plausible. In 2022, as the whole world was slowly emerging from the crisis, the government awarded GC Strategies a contract that was 10 times bigger, worth \$25 million. GC Strategies' employees won the contract by taking part in creating the contract themselves. First they defined the bid criteria, then they submitted their own bid, and then they got the \$25-million contract.

Here is another interesting fact: GC Strategies billed an extra 15% to 30% profit margin while subcontracting out the rest of the work. No one down the line was working at cost, without trying to make a profit. On average, tech firms expect to make a 15% to 20% profit from their activities. There were six different subcontractors. If we do the math, that means six people each charging a 15% to 20% profit, with another 15% to 30% profit layer on top of that. At that rate, the staggering costs come as no surprise.

Canadians demand transparency, competency and a sense of responsibility. The sound management of public finances rests on three pillars: a transparent and competitive bidding process, strict monitoring of every dollar spent, and real, harsh penalties for anyone who recklessly squanders public funds.

Our motion is clear. We are calling on the government to get taxpayers their money back within 100 days and ban companies like GC Strategies for life. I think we should also add that the people who participated in this wrongdoing should not be encouraged; they should be punished.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my colleague across the way. I would like to welcome him to the House of Commons, because I know this is his first time sitting here.

I want to ask him the same question I asked his colleague earlier. Canadians have spoken in the recent election and have given the government a mandate to address affordability.

Affordability must be a priority, especially for young people, like my colleague, and for Canadian families who aspire to buy their first home or access affordable child care. In addition, there are the many Canadian seniors, particularly those in Quebec, who want access to our dental care plan.

Can my colleague tell us what he heard while going door to door during the election campaign? How will he be able to—

• (1805)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix.

**Gabriel Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, what I have noticed during my short time here is that there are a lot of smokescreens. Policies are being presented that sound very nice but that do not provide much help.

There is talk of eliminating the GST for first-time home buyers, but that represents a tiny fraction of the population. The major issue is that house prices have skyrocketed. Houses cost \$200,000 or \$300,000 more, so young people cannot afford them. That is just one example.

Another one is that, today, we were told that measures will be taken against companies like GC Strategies. However, it was the government that awarded the contracts in the first place. The government gives preference to its friends and grants them favours. Then it pretends that it is going to do something about it.

I think it is high time for change around here.

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**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, something one of my colleagues said reminded me of one of the first requests I received from a constituent after I was elected in 2019. This poor mother came to my office with her little one in a car seat. She was no longer getting paid and was in distress. I realized then just how incompetent the federal apparatus is. Other examples include ArriveCAN and the CBSA assessment and revenue management system. There have been issues around managing and wasting public funds.

In March, just before the election, articles were published about the new Cúram platform, which is used to manage the old age security system. The article suggested that the new old age security software might be the next Phoenix. The same kinds of mistakes keep happening, which suggests some degree of systemic incompetence. First it was mothers in distress, and now seniors are in danger of not receiving their pensions.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

**Gabriel Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the Conservatives have a perfect solution for all these problems: less government intervention in personal finances and more freedom for the people of Canada.

As we said during our election campaign, we believe that the government needs to be less interventionist and interfere less in order to give people more latitude. If people have more money in their pockets, I think they will be able to make the right decisions to help themselves. They will stop paying for bureaucracy in Ottawa. They will be able to pay for services in their home.

[English]

**Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his remarks and for a wonderful speech.

The Liberals want Canadians to believe this was just a one-off misstep in government procurement, but the facts seem to tell a very different story. It seems to be a troubling pattern. In 2020, the Liberal government awarded a multi-million dollar contract to a two-person shell company, which raised eyebrows across the country. However, instead of learning from that decision, the government doubled down. It kept handing out multiple contracts to this company, and some of these contracts were multiple times larger.

My question is this: Should Canadians be outraged at this pattern of Liberal mismanagement?

[Translation]

**Gabriel Hardy:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this type of practice must stop. The motion we are moving today is clear: We want money that was given to Liberal cronies to be paid back. Initially the amount given was \$2.35 million and, two years later, that amount was 10 times greater even though, 50% of the time, the company did not even prove that it was able to provide the services it was invoicing.

It is high time for this to happen. We must stop this type of practice in the government and start taking the Conservative approach, which relies on logic, discipline and respect.

[English]

**Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House. This is my first time of any length to offer my sincere appreciation and thanks to my friends and neighbours across our region, the riding of Portage—Lisgar, for once again placing their trust in me to be their representative here in Ottawa. It is an incredibly humbling experience. It does not matter the party; when members walk into this chamber, we know the weight that that holds. We know the value and the importance of that trust that has been placed in us, so I want to thank them.

I also want to thank my beautiful bride, Cailey, and our wonderful 17-month-old daughter, Maeve. This is a difficult work environment at times. It is demanding, and their sacrifice is vital, just like all of our families are. I want to thank my immediate family, as well as my parents and Cailey's parents for the support they have offered us throughout this process, including the odd better part of the experience, which is taking care of their granddaughter.

I want to thank the family affair that was my campaign: my Aunt June, who ran our office in Winkler; my mom, who ran the office in Portage; and my dad, who led the charge for signs. I want to thank Karen, Martin and Val; Jordan, our EDA president; and all of the EDA members who were involved in the process. I want to thank my core campaign team of Drew, Michael and Don, the guys who were there with me day in, day out on the campaign trail. I want to thank Kenny and Tom, and all of the donors they had to deal with as the finance guys on my EDA and through the campaign. I also want to thank the countless volunteers, whom I wish I could name, and all of those who put up signs. It is a humbling experience.

I will be splitting my time with the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Now, on to the relevance of today's topic, which is a relatively good motion and, in particular, for a new government, one that is easily supportable. It offers two important ideas that we all, in this chamber, should support. It has been identified by the Auditor General, and by this House, which brought Kristian Firth to the bar to admonish him for the fraud he perpetrated upon Canadian taxpayers, a "once in 100 years" event, we will call it.

Taxpayers deserve their money back. It is not that complicated. GC Strategies took \$64 million from Canadian taxpayers to deliver little to no proof of any of the projects, while failing to deliver security clearances for most of their subcontractors. This is a two-person shop in a basement. It is a good gig. I almost want to applaud them for finding a flaw in the system. That flaw is what has been highlighted, appropriately and correctly, by the Auditor General. It is appalling.

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What is frustrating to me is that our Liberal colleagues across the way just do not seem to care about that and think it does not really matter because “we are a new government.” I talked to a colleague recently, and he mentioned that my generation seems numb to the scandals, and that is well earned because of the last 10 years of scandals under the Liberal government. We seem numb to \$64 million just being blown, with no recourse. We hear, “We understand. We are going to learn. We are going to be better in the future,” but that is not good enough.

Many people are, rightly, appalled at the scam by GC Strategies, including the ad scam app, this \$80,000 app that turned into a \$60 million boondoggle, that held up people at the border, that forced them into quarantine for two weeks because the app did not function correctly. It was the overpaid, expensive app that did not fulfill its purpose and cost far too much.

There are too many scammers like this. One of the highlights from the AG report is that the owners of GC Strategies are not alone. They figured out a racket, but there are others doing it, too. The rules in place have not been applied, and they need to be applied. I am not willing to let this so-called new Liberal government just walk past that.

● (1810)

We have CRA, which will happily go after a small business owner who is a bit late on a small tax or a dispute. If a little old lady is getting jammed up on her taxes, it will go after her. For the Canadians we were sent here to represent, our Parliament should have the will to push back to get them their money back.

The second part of this very reasonable motion is to ban the owners of GC Strategies from ever being involved in any government contract ever again. The government talks about how it placed a seven-year ban on them, but they could re-form. They are going to work the system, because that is what these guys are good at. They have figured out how to game the system. We should ban them for life.

Both elements of our motion today are entirely reasonable: work to get the money back; and ban the guys who caused the problem. There is no reason to vote against this motion.

Now, I want to highlight one thing. I will tell a story. I have heard a lot today about this being a new government. We have heard that over the last few months, often said by the same people who were here six months ago or five, ten years ago. The same people are saying that the government is new, that they learned their lesson and have changed.

The other day, my daughter Maeve, that beautiful little girl, filled her diaper. When I went to change her, I changed her shirt. I was tired. My wife asked me why I would change her shirt and not her diaper. I said I did not know. That is what it feels like we have changed here. Nothing has changed with the new government. It is the same people and the same advisers. It is the same government claiming it has learned a new lesson, it has learned from the AG report and it is not going to do the same thing anymore. I do not believe it. The problem is that Canadians do not believe it either. They have become numb to it. They have become numb to the scandals and the wasted money, but that does not make it okay.

The easiest thing we can do as parliamentarians today, and the right thing, is to support this very reasonable motion: work to get the money back and ban the people who ran a scam on Canadian taxpayers. When it is time to vote, I encourage all my colleagues to support this very reasonable motion.

Canadians may have forgotten that that is to be expected of us and of government. Let us work to repair that numbness that has been caused by scandal after scandal, waste after waste. We can do better. It starts with a simple motion like this. I want to work collaboratively, just as my Liberal colleagues repeatedly say, with the so-called new government, so let us do it. Here is the opportunity.

● (1815)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, our government has been honest about being ethical in the way that we do procurement, and this matter was actually dealt with last year. It sounds like the member opposite, who came to this House in 2023, wants to stay there, but Canadians have sent us back here to talk about the things that are really important, such as one Canadian economy because we are faced with unjustified tariffs.

Can the member opposite tell the Canadians who elected him and sent him back here whether he is going to support bills that are actually going to help Canadians move their lives forward?

**Branden Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, does the member know how I know it is not a new government? It is the deflection and distraction, the best tactics to try to avoid accountability for the failures. Yes, they happened in the past. That does not mean that there should not be a course correction going forward. There should also be accountability for the policy failures that led to this and the lack of respect for tax dollars. We live in a country where ministerial accountability is supposed to be a real thing. I have seen no accountability from anybody on the Liberal side of the government. That is the numbing effect that Canadians are feeling.

The government should just do the right thing and ask for the money back, demand the money back or find a way to get the money back, and ban the people who did it in the first place.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if you were in the Speaker's chair when I told the House earlier today that June 12 is "Quebec Buy Local Day". This is the first initiative of its kind in Quebec, and I want to encourage all my colleagues in the House, both the Bloc Québécois and the other political parties, to go buy a local Quebec product. Personally, I always keep a supply of rosemary-marinated eggs from Domaine du Paysan in my fridge. It is a great alternative for people who don't have the time to eat enough protein.

Now, with my little advertising plug over, I have a question for my colleague. I want to know whether he really thinks that the government has taken concrete steps to seek justice in the courts against people who literally stole from and took advantage of taxpayers. Does my colleague think that the government is making every effort to catch the people who abused the system?

• (1820)

*[English]*

**Branden Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of today being that, and I will say, perhaps surprisingly but not shockingly, that in my riding, many of the businesses actually buy a ton of products from Quebec, namely steel, an industry that we support because we are vitally ingrained in manufacturing across North America, and I will try some of those pickled eggs another time.

The Liberals cannot just keep saying "new government" and not do anything about it, ever. That is the reality. They have done nothing to change, other than just saying they have changed. They are still full of corruption, fraud and an unwillingness to fight for Canadian tax dollars, and that is what is embarrassing.

*[Translation]*

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, who is far wiser and has been here longer than me.

Is it common to uncover spending scandals like this, by a government that disrespects taxpayers and helps its friends financially throughout the process? Is that a regular occurrence here in Ottawa?

*[English]*

**Branden Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is a quick study, with a booming voice, so I think he is going to do just fine in this place. Unfortunately, he will come to learn that, yes, this is far too regular. It does not have to be, but under this current old corrupt Liberal government that we have had for 10 years, it has become far too regular.

I will go back to what I said earlier. The numbness that the average Canadian feels inside is because they are just so accustomed to scandals. They have become accustomed to waste, and that is why I think it is imperative, at least for the opposition parties and what should be the governing party, to step up and say that, especially for a new government, this is not okay.

The Auditor General highlighted complete failures, flaws and wasted money. We can, we should and we must do better.

**Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here all day attentively listening to the debate and the questions and comments from both sides of the House. I have also received several emails and phone calls from the good people of my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, who, quite frankly, are a little perplexed that something that appears to be a no-brainer, a very simple motion, is creating such animosity from the current and old and tired Liberal government.

It is quite simple. The Auditor General has produced a very scathing report on how the Liberal government managed a procurement contract, giving some \$63.7 million to two people working out of a basement to produce an app that did not accomplish what it set out to accomplish. In fact, the Auditor General goes further in pointing to many irregularities in the way the contract was managed. I dare say the word "fraud" is something we have heard in this House today, and it is true. This company, GC Strategies, took some \$64 million and did not produce what it was supposed to produce. The ask of the government by all parliamentarians elected to represent communities from coast to coast to coast is very simple. It is to get the taxpayer money back. We have a responsibility, a fiduciary duty, I would add, as elected members of Parliament to ensure that the taxpayer is made whole and that the money is given back. Also, the company that perpetrated this fraud on the Canadian people should be banned from contracts for life.

Having sat here all day, I ask myself about the purported new Liberal government. It is not new, because I look across the aisle and see all the same faces on the front bench. The Prime Minister certainly made sure to appoint a lot of the people who had a lot of experience dealing with scandals like this over the past 10 years.

There are a few that come to mind. There was the SNC-Lavalin scandal. Two ministers on the Liberal side had the courage to speak truth to power, and they were tossed out. I would remind the House that this was the case in which the former prime minister and his office decided to interfere with the judiciary in holding accountable a company that itself had perpetrated fraudulent activity.

Then, the same Liberals we see here vociferously stood up and defended the We Charity scandal, a billion-dollar boondoggle, with absolutely no opportunity for debate, communication or even presentation in this House of democracy, of the Canadian people.

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Last year, the House was besieged with a green slush fund scandal, when the same Liberals purporting to be new today refused to produce a list of who got over \$1 billion dollars in funding. Of course, we all know who got the money. It was the same old Liberal cronies, friends and supporters who got the money. Otherwise, they would have no reason for not producing a list of those names.

That is not to mention the ethics violations of the former Liberal prime minister, the only prime minister in the history of Canada to have been found guilty of ethics violations by an officer of Parliament, the Ethics Commissioner.

To hear from the Liberals today that they decided last Friday, on the eve of the Auditor General presenting her report, to take action to ensure that GC Strategies is—

• (1825)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

It being 6:27 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 16, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:42 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, June 11, the House will now resolve itself into a committee of the whole to study all votes in the main estimates and supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

• (1830)

MAIN ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2025-26

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes in the main estimates and supplementary estimates (A), Tom Kmiec in the chair)

**The Chair:** Pursuant to orders made on Tuesday, May 27, and Wednesday, June 11, the committee of the whole convenes today for the sole purpose of asking questions to the government in regard to the estimates.

[Translation]

The proceedings will unfold in the same manner as they have the last few nights. When members are recognized, they shall indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used. Members who wish to share their time with one or more members shall indicate it to the Chair.

When the time is to be used for questions, the minister's or parliamentary secretary's response should reflect approximately the time taken to ask the question, since this time will count toward the time allotted to the member.

[English]

The period of time for the consideration of the estimates in committee of the whole this evening shall not exceed two hours. I also wish to remind members that comments should be addressed through the Chair and that no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

I recognize, first, the member for Calgary Midnapore.

**Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I welcome the minister.

What is the current debt?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for being a critic—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, what is the current deficit in Canada? The debt is approximately \$1.4 billion. What is the current deficit, please?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I had the honour to present the main estimates. The details are there. Total spending is \$486.9 billion—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, last year's deficit was \$61.9 billion.

What was the amount requested in the main estimates just two weeks ago?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates give in-depth information. I would suggest that my colleague look—

**The Chair:** The hon. member, and just a reminder about splitting time.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, yes, that is right. I will be splitting my time three ways.

What is the total amount of authorities that require approval by Parliament in the main estimates?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, in the main estimates, voted authorities are at \$222.9 billion and—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, what is the current expenditure of interest on debt, please?



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**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates include approximately 10% for servicing debts.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, it is \$49.1 billion. What is the dollar amount increase in debt servicing over the last year?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as I mentioned, 10.1% is the debt servicing—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, it is \$0.7 billion over last year.

What will the public debt charges be in fiscal year 2029-30 as outlined in the PBO report? What is that amount, please?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates are a detailed document. I would suggest and ask my—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

• (1835)

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, it is \$69.9 billion.

What is the per capita breakdown for Canada's debt interest currently?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would suggest that the member should—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, it is \$1,265.46 per person.

What is the per capita breakdown for Canada's debt currently?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would again refer to the main estimate documents. I would suggest my colleague look into those documents—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, how much will the debt grow in the two hours that we have committee this evening?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I took this job about a month ago, and it was an honour to present—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, has the minister reviewed the report on GC Strategies?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we have rules in place, and this particular—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, do you think a seven-year ban is acceptable for a company that defrauded Canadians of \$64 million, or do you think that the time should be longer?

**The Chair:** Questions go through the Chair. The Chair does not think anything.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we have rules in place, and it is up to the investigation team to decide what is appropriate—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that his predecessor promised Canadians to recoup that money?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as I said, this is a new government with new ambition, and there are rules in place—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Chair, will the minister make the promise today to recoup that money for Canadians?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the investigation into this case is ongoing, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the Treasury Board paid KPMG \$700,000 for advice on how to cut consultant spending.

Did taxpayers get their money's worth?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the department—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, the Liberals are increasing spending on consultants to \$26 billion this year.

Did the government pay KPMG \$700,000 to tell the government to increase spending on companies like KPMG?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, these are the main estimates, and they are the spending for a country to run and operate. In 10 seconds or five seconds, how can the member expect a response?

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, did KPMG report the government could save money by spending billions more?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the department is working. There is a review ongoing to improve—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, the Liberal government campaigned on “Significantly reducing” money spent on management consultants, yet the estimates call for \$26 billion this year, \$6 billion more than last year. Does the minister think \$6 billion in added spending is a significant reduction?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, there is a spending review from 2023-24, which is ongoing, with the department cutting spending on travel and professional services by—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, \$26 billion is more than \$20 billion. That is how much more the government is spending on management consultants this year.

Does the minister agree that this is a significant cut, as his election campaign called for?

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**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this new government is focusing on reducing the operating budget in the next few years, actually balancing the operating budget and—

• (1840)

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, public accounts show \$3.3 billion set aside for small businesses for the carbon tax rebate. These estimates show \$3.192 billion. Where is the missing \$108 million set aside for small businesses?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I truly appreciate the question, but again, I would refer the member opposite to looking into the main estimates. There is all—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, I just quoted the main estimates, which show \$3.192 billion for a rebate. Public accounts is \$3.3 billion. Minister, where is the missing \$108 million set aside for small businesses?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would refer the member again to read the documents. The details are in there—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, I can assure the member that I actually have read the estimates, unlike himself, apparently.

The Liberals called small businesses tax cheats. Is this why the government is cheating small businesses of that \$108 million?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this government stood up for the businesses.

Actually, Canadians elected this new government to—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, whose decision was it to reduce the payout by \$108 million?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians elected this government, a responsible government, to build the economy.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, under the legislation was the Minister of National Revenue.

There was \$138 million paid in bonuses of public service management last year, based upon Treasury Board guidelines. The government only achieved 51% of its targets last year. Does the minister support his rules, which paid out so much of taxpayers' money for so much failure?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, annually, management consultants make up a very small percentage, 4% in 2023-24—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Chair, the minister is reading an answer for the wrong question.

Canada Mortgage and Housing paid out \$30 million in management bonuses despite the housing hell that the government caused. CMHC's purpose on its website is to promote housing affordability. Does the minister believe housing is affordable and thus warrants \$30 million—

**The Chair:** The hon. minister, in 15 seconds or less.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, let us talk about the main estimates, which include important investments in priority areas, including the Canadian Armed Forces, the border, health care and housing.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Chair, several members of the minister's government confirmed today that the government is in court with GC Strategies. When was the lawsuit filed?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, as members know, this particular case is under investigation. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, when was it filed?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, this particular file is under investigation—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, what is the amount of damages sought by the government?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, this particular case is under investigation, and it would not be appropriate for me—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, the minister's government said in the House numerous times today that the government has taken GC Strategies to court. A lawsuit does exist. A statement of claim exists. Will the minister table the statement of claim today in the House, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as I said before, this particular case is under investigation, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, several members of the government stated today that the government made referrals to the RCMP regarding GC Strategies. When was this and for what criminal allegations?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, that particular case is under investigation. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, over three years ago, Kristian Firth, under oath, admitted to deliberately falsifying résumés to secure government contracts. This is the classic definition of fraud. Why did the government not make a referral to the RCMP at that time?

• (1845)

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would say that this particular case is under investigation, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, why did the government continue to do business with GC Strategies after fraud came to light?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as the member knows, the public service has banned that particular—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, does the government condone and encourage fraud with outside consultants?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are having a discussion on the main estimates. Let us talk about—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, why did it take until almost three years later for the government to end its relationship with GC Strategies?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would say that the case is under investigation, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

**The Chair:** I want to freeze the time for a moment. It is much easier for the Chair to recognize members when only one member is standing at a time, and then when the member wants to claim their time, they just rise in their seat.

The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, why were they not disqualified for life?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I will say the same thing again, that this particular case is under investigation—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, why were the principal partners, Firth and Anthony, not disqualified for life?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to discuss the main estimates. Let us talk about what is in the main estimates. This is the—

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, how many ministers and parliamentary secretaries who had their hands all over this file have apologized to the House and Canadians for not exercising ministerial responsibility?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would talk about the main estimates for 2025-26. Let us talk—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, the answer is zero.

How many ministers have resigned?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, let us talk about the main estimates for 2025-26.

**Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, the answer is zero.

As the new President of the Treasury Board of this so-called new government, will the minister do the honourable thing and apologize to Canadians for not exercising prudent care over their tax dollars?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I understand my colleague wants to have a clip, but we are here to talk about the main estimates for 2025-26. Let us talk about the investments we are making in the priorities that are most important to Canadians. Let us talk about \$35.7 billion in planned spending for national defence, reflecting a \$5.1-billion increase in voted funding to support Canada's defence priorities.

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**The Chair:** The member's time has elapsed, so we will resume debate.

The President of the Treasury Board has the floor.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank the residents of Brampton—Chinguacousy Park for putting their trust in me. I thank the incredible team of volunteers for putting in their time, day and night, to send me here. I am also grateful to the Prime Minister for putting his trust in me and appointing me to this job.

It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss proposed spending for the government, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Canada School of Public Service, as outlined in the main estimates for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

It has been just over a month since I began my role as President of the Treasury Board, and I want to say how grateful I am for the warm welcome and professionalism I have seen across the department. I want to take this opportunity to thank the public service for their hard work and commitment in service to the entire Government of Canada and the people we serve. In my opinion, they are the treasurers of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. I thank them for their service.

Allow me to provide a bit of an overview of the main estimate. The 2025-26 main estimates show how the government plans to invest public resources to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead and address the priorities that matter most to Canadians. They indicate the areas in which our new government will spend funds and the limits to how much it may spend without returning to Parliament to request more funds. Throughout the year, supplementary estimates are also presented to seek parliamentary approval for additional spending requirements that were not sufficiently developed in time for inclusion in the main estimates or were unforeseen.

Overall, the main estimates for 2025-26 present information on \$222.9 billion in voted expenditures and \$264 billion in statutory spending, for a total of \$486.9 billion in planned budgetary spending for 130 organizations. Most of these funds are allocated outside of federal government organizations. In fact, transfer payments totalling \$294.8 billion account for over 60% of expenditures. These payments provide important ongoing assistance to provinces and territories, organizations and individuals. They include benefits for seniors, the Canada health transfer and the Canada disability benefit. Funds that support the operation of the departments and the programs, activities and services they deliver for Canadians total \$143.1 billion. This includes everything from national security and defence to reconciliation and housing.

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As members of the committee review the estimates and supporting documentation, they will note that the government's spending plan is closely aligned with the priorities of Canadians. For example, \$33.9 billion in voted funding is proposed for the Department of National Defence. The main estimates include \$12.3 billion to ensure the readiness of our armed forces, \$9.5 billion for military procurement and \$4.9 billion for sustainable bases, IT systems and infrastructure. A further \$4.4 billion is proposed for recruiting, developing and supporting an agile and diverse defence team, and \$2.3 billion is planned for operations.

• (1850)

Another vital issue is Canada's relationship with its indigenous people. True reconciliation means more than symbolic gestures. It requires concrete actions in education, health care, governance and economic opportunity. That is why the proposed spending for the Department of Indigenous Services totals \$25.2 billion. This amount includes investments in a broad range of services that support health, children, families and education.

There has been much discussion about the increase in the main estimates compared to last year. This can be explained by three key factors. First, because the main estimates are being presented several months later than normal, they contain items that likely would have been included in the supplementary estimates rather than in the main estimates. Second, the estimates contain increased spending in several key areas of importance for Canadians, including dental care, reconciliation and national defence. Third, the main estimates include increases in major transfer payments to provinces, territories and other organizations, which, as I mentioned earlier, make up the majority of proposed spending.

I would now like to discuss the historic investment in Canada's armed forces announced by the Prime Minister. This important investment is reflected in the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (A), which were tabled on June 9.

Canada is at a pivotal moment in its history, and we need the resources to protect our country and its citizens against foreign threats. We need to be strong at home with a military that is ready and capable, particularly in the Arctic and northern regions. Through the supplementary estimates (A), the government would do just that.

The spending of \$9 billion would provide key investments in Canada's defence and security capabilities to help our military with recruitment, training and equipment. These investments would also support our international defence relationships and obligations.

The estimates play a wider role in supporting Parliament's scrutiny of how public funds are being spent so that it can hold the government to account. All of the estimates demonstrate the government's commitment to delivering results on the issues that matter most to Canadians.

I am happy to take questions.

• (1855)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, as the minister knows, we are here tonight to talk about the main estimates, but we are also here to discuss the supplementary estimates,

which include landmark investments that will help our government achieve NATO's 2% target this year, something we heard a lot about when we were campaigning.

Maybe the minister can talk about Canada's role on the world stage and here at home and how we are going to do that.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates include a major investment in defence, and the supplementary estimates (A) are a historic investment in Canadian national defence. This investment includes the modernization of equipment to provide tools to the men and women who serve our country so they can be equipped to defend Canada and make our borders strong.

We are in a different era. This is a time when Canada is faced with unjustified tariff threats and foreign threats to our sovereignty. This investment would make sure that we are prepared for tomorrow to protect Canada—

**The Chair:** The government House leader.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, I feel kind of rude. I did not get an opportunity to congratulate the minister in his new role and for his return to Parliament.

Since the minister assumed his role and responsibility as the President of the Treasury Board, I am sure he has had ample opportunity to work with the public service and a lot of the public servants who keep the work that we do in Parliament going. I just want to take the time to thank them for the work they do.

Can the minister reflect on that experience so far and the importance of our public servants, the work they do and the contributions they bring to our country?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I am a first-generation immigrant. I built my life from scratch. Every single moment I can cherish being a Canadian, I am grateful.

I see that this country is supported by public servants who put their heart and soul into our operations and our delivery of services to Canadians. Whether it is something urgent, a wildfire or COVID, any situation, they are there to meet the moment. I would like to thank our public servants for doing an amazing and incredible job serving Canadians.

• (1900)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for that answer; I think it is the right answer.

I have another question for the minister. We have seen a rapid growth in AI and intelligence technologies, which I think are the future. They are transforming the way we do things in our economy. In my region of southwestern Ontario, this is something we are relying on for innovation and creating job opportunities.

Can the minister talk about how the Government of Canada has signalled its commitment to modernizing service delivery, improving our internal operations and increasing efficiency through AI and the different programs he is working on?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this new government is committed to using AI and investing in AI to improve productivity and the delivery of services to Canadians. This government is committed to ensuring the responsible use of artificial intelligence and ensuring that it is governed with clear values, ethics and rules.

Canada is a global leader in public sector AI, and we recently published an AI strategy for the federal public service to guide our path forward, further enhancing Canada's leadership. The strategy will accelerate responsible AI adoption throughout the federal public service to deliver better digital services to Canadians and businesses; enhance public service productivity; and increase our capacity for discovery through science and research. The strategy was developed through extensive consultations with experts and the public. It will be renewed every two years to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to technological advances.

**The Chair:** The government deputy House leader has less than 10 seconds.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, I just want to thank the minister for being here tonight to answer questions. If there is anything else he wants to put on the record, I welcome him to do that.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ):** Mr. Chair, the estimates detail the amount of spending that the government is asking Parliament to approve. At the same time, the government is supposed to tell us what it intends to do with that money through the departmental plans that it usually tables at the same time. However, we still do not have the departmental plans.

The government is asking us for money but refuses to tell us how it plans to spend it.

Does the President of the Treasury Board think it is acceptable to ask for blank cheques?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be tabling the departmental plans before the House adjourns for the summer.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, before he asks us to authorize \$487 billion in spending, could the President of the Treasury Board tell us what the projected deficit will be this year?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would remind my colleague that over 60% of the main estimates goes to the provinces and territories. There are the transfers for health care and dental care. It is re-

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ally important to note that over 60% of the payments are going to provinces and territories for the various services that Canadians receive.

• (1905)

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, that was actually not my question. I asked the President of the Treasury Board to tell us what the projected deficit will be this year.

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Speaker, again, I would refer to the main estimates. Currently, that is about 10%. That is all I can say.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, there is something strange in the estimates. The Canada Revenue Agency's budget is cut by \$7 billion, or 40%. For years, when we press the government to take action against those who profit from the use of tax havens, it has been telling us that it will add resources to the CRA to fight against international tax avoidance. Now the government is cutting that money.

Are the estimates telling us that the government is giving up, might I say even more, on the abuse of tax havens?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the new government was elected by Canadians to build a stronger Canada, to build our economy, one economy rather than 13 economies. That is exactly what we are focusing on to build Canada strong, to protect our borders, to protect our communities and to invest in our defence system.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, this new government is already 10 years old and after the answer I just got, it seems that it is not really going to change, either. I will move on.

Is the CRA's reduced budget good news, in fact?

Will Ottawa finally agree to allow Quebecers to file a single tax return and to allow Revenu Québec to handle it? Is the elimination of the duplication reflected in the estimates?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would remind my colleague again that over 60% of the main estimates are transfer payments to provinces and territories for the delivery of health care services and other aspects.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I was actually referring once again to a reduction that might make Quebecers less inclined to use tax havens.

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In budget 2023, amidst a big scandal over contracts awarded to McKinsey, the government announced that it would substantially reduce the budgets allocated to consulting firms. That never happened. Instead, the main estimates indicate that the amount allocated to consultants, that is, the “professional and special services” line item, will increase again this year by \$7 billion, or 26%, from \$19.1 billion to \$26.1 billion.

Why can the government not honour its own commitment to reduce the use of external consultants, which is costing taxpayers a fortune?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the government has started to work with the departments to cut spending on professional services and travel by \$500 million. In 2024-25, 2.3 billion was reallocated to priority areas, and this year, 2025-26, that amount will be increased to 3.5 billion. That work began in 2023 and is ongoing.

The government is making sure that spending is being carefully managed and focused on our most pressing priorities. This year we are reallocating 3.5 billion to priority areas.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, the government is increasing spending. We understand that.

Much has been said about the \$38 billion in new operating expenditures in the main estimates, which are up by 8.4%. However, when we take a closer look, it is even worse. Major transfers to individuals, such as old age security, or to the provinces, such as health transfers, are statutory appropriations that have not been voted on. Statutory appropriations are only increasing by 2.6%, which seems very reasonable, but it is not enough.

The main estimates that we will be voting on next Tuesday are what keep the federal bureaucracy running, and those are the amounts that are skyrocketing. They are increasing by \$31 billion, a 16% increase. That is eight times more than what the Liberal Party promised during the election, when it promised to cap the increase at 2%.

Why?

• (1910)

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in my remarks, there has been much discussion about the increase in the main estimates compared to last year. This can be explained by three key factors. First, because the main estimates are being presented several months later than normal, they contain items that likely would have been included in supplementary estimates rather than in the main estimates. Second, the estimates contain increased spending in several key areas of importance to Canadians, including dental care, reconciliation and national defence. Third, the main estimates include increases in major transfer payments to provinces, territories and other organizations, as I mentioned earlier, make up the majority of the proposed spending.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, it is odd that the estimates are being tabled a little later than usual, yet the government is increasing spending eightfold. I hope that the health transfers will be sizable.

In Quebec, the government is on the defensive because the new computer system for the Société de l'assurance de l'automobile du Québec, or SAAQ, cost twice as much as expected, \$1 billion instead of \$500 million. One minister resigned. A public inquiry is currently under way to get to the bottom of this.

Meanwhile, in Ottawa, the government thinks it is normal to present estimates that triple the amount allocated to equipment purchases. The budget was \$2.7 billion last year, and the government wants to increase that to \$10.8 billion. That is a 190% increase, and it has nothing to do with the new spending on military equipment, which is in a separate document.

How does the government explain the 190% increase in spending on miscellaneous equipment purchases?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians elected the new government to take decisive and bold actions to build one economy, make Canada strong and create more jobs, and that is exactly what we are going to do. People can appreciate how, in one month, the new government has been working to not only deliver for Canadians but also remove the consumer carbon tax. This was the first action we took, and 22 million Canadians will get tax relief. I hope my—

**The Chair:** The hon. member has the floor.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, during the election, the new Liberals promised to enable border services officers to retire after 25 years of service instead of 35, as their union requested.

As the employer of the public service, does the President of the Treasury Board intend to implement that measure?

[English]

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, what we promised Canadians during the election was that the new government will build one economy instead of 13, the new government will make Canada strong and the new government will invest more and spend less, and this is exactly what we are going to do.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, on top of having to go through Phoenix when it comes to their pay, public servants now have to go through Canada Life when it comes to their insurance.

As the employer of the public service, when will the President of the Treasury Board address the situation?

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**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I am committed to improving the services of any service provider to the public service. I expect the service provider to be up to the standard and to stay within those guidelines.

• (1915)

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I hope it happens faster than it is taking to address the Phoenix issues. Speaking of Phoenix, that pay system has been failing for nine years, and those failures are putting public servants' lives at risk. As a member from the North Shore, I know what I am taking about.

Does the government intend to launch an independent investigation into this scandal?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, there is a new government with an ambitious agenda. In a very short time, we have not only removed the consumer carbon—

**The Chair:** The hon. member has the floor.

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, at the time, Australia had already experienced problems with the system, and the unions alerted the federal government, whether it was the old one or the new one.

Why did it still buy the software?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada remains committed to resolving outstanding pay issues while modernizing the public service.

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, during the pilot phase, several departments reported that the system was far from satisfactory.

Why did the government continue to roll out the pay system despite the warnings and poor test results?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, all public servants deserve to be paid accurately and on time. The Government of Canada remains committed to resolving outstanding pay—

**The Chair:** The hon. member has the floor.

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, the government is trying to cut costs and get unions to agree to less compensation. It recovered overpayments and was sometimes not justified in doing so, and only then did it reimburse public servants dealing with pay errors that cost them thousands of dollars. For a person who lost their house, a total of \$2,500 for four years is not very generous.

Will the government finally provide adequate compensation to its own employees and take full responsibility for the problems caused by its own negligence?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are committed to a continued dialogue with the bargaining agents on the issue.

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I hope there will be a conclusion, not just a discussion.

The French language commissioner published a report in November 2024 about understanding the decline of French and reversing that trend. It stated that the federal public service is primarily responsible for the anglicization of the Outaouais region, with rates of nearly 60%.

Will the secretary repeat what his organization says, namely that 25% of civil servants are francophone and that 95% of civil servants in bilingual positions meet the requirements of their position?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I am committed to ensuring that the Official Languages Act is implemented and respected across all federal institutions.

*[Translation]*

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, does the minister agree with no longer hiring employees on the promise of learning French since they do not meet the requirements of the job at the time of hiring?

*[English]*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I am committed to ensuring that the Official Languages Act is implemented and respected across all federal institutions.

**Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to rise to lend my voice to the debate on the 2025-2026 main estimates.

Indeed, the ability to exercise spending oversight is one of the most important responsibilities we have as members of Parliament. The principle of accountability requires that parliamentarians know and approve how public funds are spent so they can hold the government accountable for its actions.

It is a principle that the government and I, as a member of Parliament, take very seriously. That is why the government continues to make every effort necessary to ensure that parliamentarians and Canadians have timely access to accurate and understandable information about government spending.

As members know, the main estimates serve as the mechanism to seek Parliament's approval of government expenditures. The document has two parts. Part I is the government expenditure plan, which provides a summary of and highlights year-over-year changes in departmental spending and transfer payments. This helps provide perspective on the major issues influencing the government's planned spending.

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Part II is the main estimates, which many members of Parliament refer to as the blue book. It directly supports the appropriation acts for the main estimates. Part II also provides a list of resources individual departments and agencies require for the upcoming fiscal year so they can deliver their programs and services to Canadians. It is forward-looking in that it identifies proposed spending that will be included in a future appropriation bill that Parliament will be asked to approve. Once approved, these funds will allow federal departments and agencies to continue delivering the critical programs and services Canadians rely on.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about what is in the main estimates for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, but first, for those new to the chamber, I will provide a quick overview. The Treasury Board Secretariat, or TBS, is a central agency that supports the Treasury Board. It helps departments put government policies into action and ensures public funds are used wisely and effectively. TBS sets the direction for how departments manage people, money, technology and even their environmental footprint through its administrative leadership role. Some of its responsibilities in this area include providing guidance on financial management, advancing the government's digital transformation and making government operations greener and more climate resilient. For this work, TBS is requesting \$140 million, which includes a \$12.8-million increase in funding for the low-carbon fuel procurement program, \$3.7 million for the renewal of the office of public service accessibility and a \$3.2-million increase in funding to strengthen cybersecurity.

Next, TBS plays a big role as the employer for the core public administration for which these estimates propose \$4.1 billion primarily for public service insurance plans. It handles compensation, labour relations and workplace policies, everything from negotiating collective agreements to promoting diversity and inclusion. TBS is also responsible for spending oversight, making sure government programs are efficient, effective and aligned with our priorities. It reviews departmental spending proposals and advises Treasury Board ministers on funding decisions. Some of the proposed spending in support of oversight responsibility include \$3.75 billion for the operating and capital budget carry forward, \$1 billion for government contingencies to address urgent and unforeseen pressures such as natural disasters, and \$600 million to reimburse departments for certain payroll expenditures, including maternity and parental leave.

Finally, TBS oversees regulatory policy. It works to modernize regulations, reduce unnecessary red tape and ensure that the rules protect Canadians' health, safety and the environment, while also supporting innovation and co-operation with other jurisdictions. For this work, the department is requesting \$10.5 million. Altogether, TBS is seeking \$9.8 billion in these main estimates. With this funding, the secretariat can continue to support a modern, responsive and accountable government, one that delivers real results for Canadians and makes smart use of every tax dollar.

Let me now turn to the overall 2025-26 main estimates. These main estimates present information on \$222.9 billion in voted expenditures, meaning spending to be approved by Parliament, and \$264 billion in statutory spending already authorized through

existing legislation. This adds up to a total of \$489.9 billion in planned budgetary spending for 130 organizations.

● (1920)

Transfer payments to other levels of government, other organizations and individuals account for \$294.8 billion in these estimates. For their part, operating and capital expenditures total \$143.1 billion. The remaining \$49.1 billion in the estimates would be used to pay down interest and administrative costs on the public debt.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not also address the Governor General's special warrants that were issued to fund government operations during this year's general election, the fundamental element of our democracy. The total amount of the two special warrants issued in this period is \$73.4 billion. The first was for \$40.3 billion and provided supply for the period from April 1 to May 15. The second total is \$33.1 billion, which provides additional supply for the period from May 16 to June 29. The spending authorized through these special warrants is included in the main estimates total, and the amounts shown for each organization take this spending into account.

To support transparency, details on the special warrant issued during the period of time that Parliament was dissolved for the purpose of the 2025 general election are available through the Canada Gazette and the orders in council online database. A summary report on special warrants is also tabled in Parliament and posted on Canada.ca within 15 days of the return of Parliament.

Ensuring information is readily accessible allows Canadians and parliamentarians to explore the main estimates and other government financial reports to see how public money is spent. These main estimates demonstrate how the government plans to invest public resources to meet the serious challenges and opportunities that are before us and address the priorities that matter most to Canadians.

The government is committed to ensuring that Canadians can continue to rely on the critical services they need. When appropriation act No. 1, 2025-2026 is introduced, I urge all members to pass the bill without delay.



Through you, Mr. Chair, I first want to congratulate my colleague on his re-election and his appointment as the President of the Treasury Board. I would like to thank him for appearing before the committee of the whole this evening to discuss the main estimates for 2025 and 2026. I know Canadians do not often see the behind-the-scenes coordination required to ensure that departments are properly resourced to deliver the programs and services they rely on every day, and I think it is important to recognize the central role the Treasury Board plays in that process.

As we all know, the main estimates provide Parliament with a detailed snapshot of how government plans to allocate public funds in the coming fiscal year, reflecting key policy priorities and commitments. With that in mind, recognizing that we are still early in the fiscal year, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board if he could please walk us through some of the high-level themes or priorities that Canadians should take away from the 2025-2026 main estimates.

In particular, are there any shifts in spending or areas of focus that he would highlight as especially significant with respect to supporting government commitments, responding to economic pressures or advancing service delivery improvements for Canadians?

• (1925)

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I congratulate the member on being elected and having the privilege of being in this House.

There are some key funding areas in the main estimates 2025-26, with a total of \$486.9 billion in budgetary spending, comprising \$222.9 billion in voted authorities and \$264 billion in statutory expenditures. In comparison to the total authorities for 2024-25, plus supplementary (A)s and supplementary (B)s, this represents an increase of \$0.2 billion. The amount is made up of transfer payments at over 60% or \$294.8 billion, operating and capital expenditures at 29.4%, and public debt charges at 10.1%.

There are 130 organizations that have funding requirements in the main estimates, including DND, ISED, EC, ESDC and health, which represent the five largest voted departments. The main estimates include \$105.7 billion in total expenditures for Employment and Social Development Canada. This is the overview. There is also \$25.3 billion for Indigenous Services, and \$13 billion for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. There is \$35.7 billion for National Defence. These are a few that are included in the main estimates for spending and investment.

• (1930)

**Sima Acan:** Mr. Chair, I want to begin by recognizing the work the minister's department has done over the past few years to enhance transparency and strengthen public trust in how government operates.

We have seen steady efforts towards improving reporting tools, streamlining digital access to spending information and increasing the clarity of documents like the main estimates. At the same time, there has been a growing focus across departments on improving the quality and accessibility of services Canadians depend on, from passport renewals to benefit processing to digital tools that make navigating government easier. These are things that touch people's

### *Business of Supply*

lives directly and help shape their confidence in public service as a whole.

With that in mind, and with the understanding that transparency and service delivery are both central to the Treasury Board's role, could you please speak to how the 2025-26 main estimates reflect your ongoing commitment to transparency in government spending and how that commitment is helping to support improvements in frontline service delivery for Canadians? Are there any particular initiatives or approaches you would highlight that illustrate progress in these areas or set the stage for further enhancements?

**The Chair:** I will remind members to speak through the chair and avoid using the word "you".

The President of the Treasury Board may go ahead.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, a working group is currently looking at opportunities to improve productivity so that we can improve services to Canadians. I look forward to receiving its recommendations soon.

Also, we have a spending review, which started in 2023-24, with departments cutting spending on travel and professional services by \$500 million. In 2024-25, \$2.3 billion was reallocated to priority areas. This year, 2025-26, that amount increases to \$3.5 billion.

**Sima Acan:** Mr. Chair, I know that the minister's department plays a central role in ensuring that the departments across government are held to a high standard of financial management, and that the expenditures align with both policy goals and responsible stewardship of taxpayers' dollars.

With that in mind, I would ask the minister how the 2025-26 main estimates reflect the government's commitment to responsible spending. Could the minister please share some examples of how the department is working to ensure that the funds are being used—

**The Chair:** There is no more time.

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

**Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time three ways.

What percentage of pre-qualified IT contractors have no technical abilities, like the admitted fraudsters at the two-man, basement-headquartered GC Strategies?

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**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, as I have mentioned numerous times before, this particular case is under investigation, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

• (1935)

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, that is an unacceptable answer. I am not asking the minister about criminal proceedings. I am asking the minister about his department's failures to enforce the rules that are specifically under his mandate.

He refused to answer my first question, so my next question is this: On what basis was GC Strategies, which had no technical capabilities, pre-qualified as an IT contractor based on the rules set out by the department the minister oversees?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, as I have said numerous times, there are rules in place and rules are being followed, and this particular case is under investigation. It is not appropriate for a minister responsible for any portfolio to comment on cases that are under—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, what is not appropriate is for a minister to refuse to answer questions when the opposition is looking to determine if we can have confidence in his department and when the Liberals are looking for \$222 billion in new spending authorities, which is the exercise that we have this evening in this committee of the whole.

How did the Treasury Board, the minister's department, allow payments of \$60 million for what is known as the arrive scam to be paid to GC Strategies without documented deliverables?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians elected us to work together to deliver the priorities that are most important to Canadians. Canadians sent us here, and tonight, I will remind my colleague that we are here to ask questions on the main estimates.

Let us talk about the main estimates, and the national defence spending and investments in national defence. Let us—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, how many times was GC Strategies awarded contracts through Treasury Board-approved processes?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I request that the hon. member allow me to respond to questions.

The main estimates include—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, the minister has failed to answer even simple questions when I have given him ample time to do that.

Does the Treasury Board have any mechanisms in place to make sure that work is completed before payments are made?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we have a robust mechanism of rules in the Canadian government and rules are being followed.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, were the rules followed in this case?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, in our main estimates, 2025-26, indigenous services—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, has any Treasury Board employee faced discipline in this case?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to discuss the main estimates.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, will the minister table a list of all firms that are currently pre-qualified to do IT work?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, if the hon. member has the same question, I will have the same answer. We are here to discuss the main estimates—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, with \$222 billion in new spending authorities requested by the President of the Treasury Board, it is absolutely unacceptable that the minister came this evening without any information.

I have one final question. Was the minister ever briefed on the ArriveCAN scandal?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I expect that I will have the time to respond. The main estimates include—

**The Chair:** The time has elapsed for providing an answer.

Proceeding with debate, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Chair, does the minister think that people who work for the public service should be able to work as external contractors at the same time as they are employed by the public service?

**The Chair:** The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

• (1940)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, I have a concern. A member is actually recording what is taking place. I see a member holding a phone.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** To address the point of order—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Order.

I can see very clearly that there are timers being used by different parties.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

The parliamentary secretary will come to order. Both sides will come to order.

The rules are being obeyed. There are no pictures to be taken in the House. I have seen no pictures being taken; there are just timers being used.

The President of the Treasury Board has the floor.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would request that my colleague repeat the question, please.

**The Chair:** I am proceeding to the next question now.

The hon. member has the floor.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, does the minister think that people who work for the public service should be able to work as external contractors at the same time as they are employed by the public service?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, there are rules in place, and there are conflict of interest rules in place, and I expect everyone to abide by those rules.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, it is just a really simple question about the minister's philosophy in terms of how he thinks things should work. Does the minister think a person who is employed by the public service should be able to simultaneously work as an external contractor? It is the third time I have asked the question. Could the minister answer it? Does he think that is appropriate, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, all public servants must follow conflict of interest rules. As a condition of employment, all public servants must adhere to the directive on conflict of interest. They must identify and address the situation of real, apparent or potential conflict of interest. As of October 2024, all employees must—

**The Chair:** The hon. member has the floor.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, am I to infer from the answer that the minister thinks there are some instances where it is okay for a public servant to also be an external contractor?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would request that my colleague read what I said: All public servants must follow conflict of interest rules.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, I think it is pretty clear from that answer that the minister thinks there are some cases where it is acceptable to double-dip as a government employee and a contractor. If he does not think that, he can say so, but I think that is pretty troubling.

I have another question: Does the minister think that companies that do work for hostile foreign regimes should also be able to simultaneously do work for the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would refer back to my comments, which my colleague should look into and read. All public servants and the companies must follow conflict of interest rules. There are robust rules in place in every department and they must follow those rules.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, the minister did not listen to the question I asked. He repeated his non-answer from the previous question. I invite him to come up with a new non-answer to the new question.

### *Business of Supply*

The new question was this: Does the minister think that companies that do work for hostile foreign regimes should be able to simultaneously do work for the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, what I can tell the member is that the government, as I would expect our departments to do, makes sure we are doing business with suppliers of integrity. The government updated its ineligibility and suspension policy—

**The Chair:** The hon. member has the floor.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, with all due respect to the minister, this is embarrassing. I would be embarrassed. I am almost embarrassed for him.

Is the government planning a major overhaul of the indigenous procurement program?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates include \$25.3 billion in planned spending for Indigenous Services Canada, reflecting a—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, the question, again, is this: Is the government planning a major overhaul of the indigenous procurement program?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I understand my colleague wants to get a clip and he is anxious. The main estimates, again, include twenty-five—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

• (1945)

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, very respectfully to the President of the Treasury Board, there is nothing virtuous or public service-minded about ignoring serious questions from members of the opposition and repeating lines that have absolutely nothing to do with those questions. This is not a “gotcha”; this is a basic question of government policy. Is—

**The Chair:** Time has elapsed for questions.

The next member is the member for Abbotsford—South Langley.

**Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the PSPC and the Treasury Board's goals are to be accurate with the management of the government-funded and -led projects.

How many Canadians are living in the converted housing spaces that were former government office buildings?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, can I ask my colleague to repeat the question, please?

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, again, the PSPC and the Treasury Board goals are to be accurate with the management of the funded and led projects.

I would like to know how many Canadians are living in converted housing spaces that were former government office spaces.

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**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this portfolio has a minister responsible for it. I can ask my colleague to get in touch with the member and respond to the specific question related to his ministry.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, I will move on to my next question.

How many buildings does the government own currently? I just want the number.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, we are here to discuss the main estimates for 2025-26. Let us talk about the main estimates, what we have—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, while the member opposite is not the Minister of Housing, tonight we are rising to speak on the issue of government spending, and this also falls under the 2024 budget.

Could you please answer the question?

**The Chair:** Just a reminder, questions go through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, can I ask my colleague to repeat the question, please?

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, we can clearly see here that the minister cannot answer any questions. This is another failed Liberal broken promise. I will move on to my next question.

Ottawa has the most federal buildings in the country. However, the Liberal MP for Ottawa Centre stated that this program is not moving fast enough. If the minister's own colleague is criticizing this program, why would Canadians not criticize it? Does he have an answer for that?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians elected the Liberals to come here and deliver for Canadians, to work together and to not play politics. We are in a different era. We have an economic threat. We have a sovereignty threat. We need to work together to deliver the priorities most important to Canadians.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, I have a simple question. How many office spaces have been sold here in Ottawa?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would again refer this question to the minister responsible, or if it is within the main estimate, my colleague should look into that. There are more details. We cannot give a very short answer for a specific issue.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, the minister failed to answer because the answer is zero. The Liberals failed to deliver any.

Under the federal lands initiative, 4,000 units were to be built by 2028. It has been seven years and the government has only built 309. How does the government plan on building the remaining 3,691 units when it takes seven years to build 309 units?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the Liberals made a promise while campaigning that we would build homes, including affordable homes, with a speed that has never been seen in Canada. That is exactly what we are focusing on. We will be making one economy, building more homes and securing our borders.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, does the government think that taxpayers would rather have homes built or more Liberal-connected consulting contracts, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, with that style of yes or no, Conservatives have not learned a lesson—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, we are in the middle of a housing crisis. Why is the government prioritizing consultants instead of putting roofs over Canadians' heads?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, their leader, who was rejected by his own constituents, whom he had represented for 20 years—

• (1950)

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, what reports can the government show to the people of Abbotsford about the housing options program for their city?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, can I ask my colleague to repeat the question, please?

**Sukhman Gill:** Mr. Chair, I will. I am trying to run through my questions because the minister is not answering.

How will the government show the housing options for programs for my city of Abbotsford?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would ask my colleague, the minister responsible for housing, to get in touch with my hon.—

**The Chair:** Resuming debate, I recognize the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Chair, I am participating virtually and sharing my time, which I believe is 15 minutes, with the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

I will start my questions to the hon. President of the Treasury Board through you, Mr. Chair.

I have gone back to the 2021 mandate letter, the last I could find, to the President of the Treasury Board. I am wondering if he can tell us whether pursuit of the greening of government strategy, which was a priority then in 2021, remains a priority for the government.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, that is a very important question. We are committed to government operations that are net zero, climate resilient and green. We are committed to greening government strategies, establishing the Government of Canada's targets and commitments to get to net zero and green operations by 2050 and enhance the climate resilience office operation by 2035.

Our efforts have resulted in positive results as of 2023-2024. Eighty-three per cent of the applicable light-duty vehicles purchased by the federal government were green. Greenhouse gas emissions for our real property and conventional vehicle fleet were reduced by 42% compared to—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, I am trying to keep my question short to keep the minister a chance to answer it briefly.

In 2021, another priority was to improve whistle-blower protection in the Government of Canada. Does that remain a priority, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, there is a task force to examine the opportunity to improve the disclosure process. I look forward to receiving its report this spring.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, through you to the President of the Treasury Board, is whistle-blower protection a priority?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the government is committed to promoting a positive, respectful and safe public sector culture that is grounded in values and ethics and inspires public trust. The Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act protects public servants against reprisals when they report a wrongdoing.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, the President of the Treasury Board spoke earlier tonight of \$9 billion in defence spending. Given the Prime Minister's comments that our relationship with the U.S. as it once was is over, I would like to ask if the government has any concerns that putting billions of dollars of Canadian funds into defence systems that require going back to the United States for spare parts is a wise investment for defence.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, in the supplementary estimates (A), we have a historic investment in national defence, which is \$9 billion. We are at a pivotal time when Canada needs more automated equipment for our men and women to secure our borders, to secure our future, to—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, my question was whether we should be relying on the United States for purchases that could be made from other countries that are not currently hostile to our economic success as a nation.

• (1955)

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, in the announcement the Prime Minister made for defence, he said we are diversifying our partners, including those in Europe and the U.K., so we are looking into how we could build our defence capabilities together.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, I learned from our former colleague John McKay that, when he was touring Scandinavia as chair of the defence committee, he asked why Sweden had such successful high-tech and defence contractors. The Swedish government told him it was because it provided free post-secondary education and, therefore, attracted a very skilled workforce.

Would the President of the Treasury Board consider advocating for free post-secondary education to enhance our capacity economically?

### *Business of Supply*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we believe in making investments in priorities that are most important to Canadians, and we are taking actions to build up a country where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, would the government recognize that post-secondary education is underfunded but little discussed, and that it would be a wise investment for our economy to provide more support for universities and post-secondary?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, that is a very important question, but I would remind my hon. colleague that this is provincial territory. We give a transfer, whether it is for health care or other areas, to provinces and territories. They are the ones who are responsible for their—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Chair, by my clock, I have now used six minutes and 40 seconds. I have seven minutes and a half.

I would like to suggest that it does not violate the rules of this place to do something unusual. I have been watching my colleagues, for the fifth night in a row, sitting in one place and abiding by our rules, which the Chair is executing brilliantly. It is tough. It is short answers. People are not having time to breathe or move. As an act of charity, I would like to take my last 10 seconds to count to 10, and I urge my colleagues to stand up and stretch: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10.

We can now go to the brilliant member for Edmonton Strathcona.

**Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to extend my congratulations to the minister on his appointment.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has warned that, to pay for the government's promises, deep cuts to the federal public service will be unavoidable. Canadians deserve to know what things are going to be cut. Is it their public health care system? Is it veteran services? What will be cut to make sure that the government can live up to the promises they have already made?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to congratulate my colleague for her re-election.

We will balance our operating budget over the next three years by cutting waste, capping the size of public service and using AI to boost public—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, without a budget, it will be difficult for any Canadian to take the minister at his word.

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The disability benefit is something that was brought up earlier this evening. The payments are meant to be starting in July, and the process to apply for the disability benefit has not even opened yet. Nothing has been done.

How does this minister expect that he will be able to pay people the insufficient, but very necessary, disability benefit?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this falls under the minister for ESDC, but there is \$87.5 billion for pension and benefits, including disability benefits.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, the minister is responsible for ensuring that those benefits are paid to people living with a disability. I would say those are the people in this country who are most vulnerable and are constantly being asked to wait by the government.

The minister also spoke about the important role Canada will continue to play in the world and talked about defence spending. While the New Democrats are happy with the 2% defence spending announcement, I am very concerned about an 11% cut to spending on peace and security.

How does he account for that?

● (2000)

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, this is the area of the Minister of International Development. On the sideline, I can ask my colleague, and we can have a discussion with them to see what the reality is.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, in addition to the 11% cut to peace and security spending, there is a 5% cut in development spending and a 40% decrease in peacekeeping since 2016. That does not feel, to me, like a government that is playing a meaningful role on the world stage.

In addition to that, the minister knows that there have been recent reports, including from NCCM and the University of Toronto's "Under Layered Suspicion", that have revealed troubling evidence that Muslim-led charities are being disproportionately targeted by audits by Canada Revenue Agency. This raises serious concerns about systematic bias and Islamophobia within the CRA.

What does the minister have to say about this?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, hate or discrimination has no place in Canada, whether it is in a department or the community. This government is committed to improving and working on diversity and inclusion and making investments to remove barriers and discrimination.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, I was not asking if they were going to be working on reducing racism. I was asking if they were going to fix the systems that were systematically targeting Muslim charities within the CRA. The answer he provided does not answer the question I asked him.

Indigenous and northern communities continue to face critical challenges, from inadequate infrastructure and housing to limited access to clean water and essential services. Given the federal government's responsibility and commitments, what concrete steps is the government taking to ensure long-term funding for indigenous and northern communities?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would like to go back to my colleague's question and what I said, that no department, no official should discriminate against anyone. There is no place for discrimination in Canada.

In regard to indigenous services, the 2025-26 main estimates include \$25.3 billion in planned spending for Indigenous Services Canada, reflecting a \$4.3-billion increase in voted funding to advance—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, in the last Parliament, I tabled some legislation that would tie federal transfer payments intended for post-secondary education to be used solely for post-secondary education. It was a piece of legislation that was intended to ensure that the transfer payments we send from the federal government to the provincial government could direct and ensure that post-secondary education became more affordable and made sure that there was adequate staffing.

I am wondering whether the minister would be willing to look at ensuring that the transfers that go to provinces are tied to making sure the post-secondary institutions receive the funding that was intended for their use.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would remind my colleague that there are rules in place between federal and provincial or territorial governments. Transfers are made accordingly following those rules. The rules are followed when transfer payments are made.

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, yes, and those rules can be changed, which is what our job is here actually, Minister.

My next question is on Canada summer jobs. In Edmonton Strathcona, four out of five Canada summer jobs are unfunded, despite the fact that we have a youth employment crisis in this country.

I am wondering if the minister has anything to say about the chronic underfunding of the Canada summer jobs program, particularly in urban ridings, such as Edmonton Strathcona.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this falls under the ESDC minister's portfolio. I would advise my colleague to get in touch with the minister responsible for that.

● (2005)

**Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, I would like to just point out to the minister that in fact he is responsible for ensuring that money leaves the federal government, and so he has oversight on how that is done. All programs require funding from the federal government, and we have the ability to ask him questions about those funds. The fact that he has not been able to answer very many of those this evening is deeply worrying for many of us.

I will ask one more question. It is about the investment in women and girls across this country. Right now, we are seeing a backsliding on the feminist agenda that the previous government had guaranteed—

**The Chair:** The hon. member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, as well as the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

On February 28 of last year, this House ordered the government to recover all funds paid to arrive scam contractors, who did no work, within 100 days. It has been 16 months since that House order. As of today, how much money has been recovered?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we are here tonight to have a discussion on the main estimates for 2025-26. Let us talk about investments in national defence, which include \$35.7 billion in planned spending for national—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, the minister has increased, through the estimates, the budget for contractors by \$7 billion. My question related specifically to the contracting practices of the Liberal government as it pertains to arrive scam. How much money has been recovered to date? Is the number zero?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I would say again that this specific case is under investigation. It is not appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, I will take it that the number is zero.

Has the government commenced legal action against GC Strategies in relation to arrive scam?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, there are rules in place, and everyone has to abide by those rules. If there is any—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, a legal action is a public document. Has the government commenced legal action against GC Strategies in relation to arrive scam, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to talk about the main estimates, which include important investments to support key priorities like HR modernization, greening initiatives—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, millions of taxpayer dollars improperly went out the door to GC Strategies under the Liberal government's watch. All day, Liberal MPs referenced this mysterious legal action against GC Strategies. Does it exist, yes or no?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this is a new government. I tabled the main estimates, and we are here to talk about the main estimates, which include investments—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, it sounds a lot like the same old government with the same non-answers and no accountability. Has the government taken any action, any steps against GC Strategies to

recover millions of taxpayer dollars for work that was not done, anything?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would say that this particular case is under investigation, and it is not appropriate for me to comment on that.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, what a pathetic non-answer.

Has any government official who authorized payment to GC Strategies without proof of work been dismissed?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to talk about the main estimates for 2025-26. I wonder if my colleague would talk about our supplementary—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

• (2010)

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, have any government officials who authorized these improper payments been subject to disciplinary action?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I was expecting that my colleague would talk about the main estimates. There are payment transfers to provinces, including his riding and home province as well—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, has anyone in the government been held accountable for this colossal abuse of millions of taxpayer dollars?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, we are here to talk about main estimates for 2024-25, which include—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, no monies have been recovered, no legal action has been taken against GC Strategies, no steps have been taken whatsoever to recover tax—

**The Chair:** The time has elapsed.

The next member to be recognized is the hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Chair, how many people work for the federal public service?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the federal workforce is over 350,000 people in the public service.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, how many worked for the federal government when the Liberals took over in 2015?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, our population was about 35 million—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

*Business of Supply*

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, one of the minister's aides just handed him a piece of paper. I am hoping it has the answer.

How many people worked for the federal government in 2015 when the Liberals took office?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, my colleague expects that—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** There is—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, I will spot the minister; I am feeling generous. In 2015, it was 250,000. That is an increase of 107,000, or 40%, in the last 10 years.

Are taxpayers getting 40% more out of their federal government?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to talk about our main estimates, which include payments and services to Canadians—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates include the money spent on personnel in the federal government. Are taxpayers getting 40% more out of the federal public service than they were in 2015?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to talk about the main estimates. We have \$486 million—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Apparently, the minister is not here to talk about anything, Mr. Chair, but I will try again.

In 2023-24, the Public Service Commission annual report said there was a 3% increase in the federal public service. The Canadian population grew by 1.8% in 2024. Does the minister think it is normal and justifiable that the federal public service is outpacing population growth?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, can I ask my colleague to repeat the question, please?

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, I will not allow the minister to be a demagogue when we have such limited time. He heard the question. If he would like to answer it on my next one, he is fully able to.

What benchmarks does the federal government use to ensure that the public service is delivering value to taxpayers?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, this new government is focused on spending less so that Canadians can save more. That is why we have committed to reducing the cost of government operations over the next three years. We will achieve—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, the minister either did not listen to the question or did not care about it. These are important questions that deserve answers. It is shameful that the minister responsible for the federal public service has no interest in talking about whether that service is operating effectively.

The federal public service has grown by 40% in the last 10 years. Are Canadians getting their money's worth?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague talks about an increase in the public service, but does not talk about an increase in the population. The public service is there to serve Canadians, to deliver priorities to Canadians and—

• (2015)

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for giving me something to work with here.

Does the minister think that population growth and growth in the public service should be the same?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, to ensure transparency and accountability, all proposed spending and actual expenditures are reported to both Parliament and—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates show \$62.7 billion in spending on personnel. That is an increase over last year of \$3.5 billion. Are Canadian taxpayers getting more from the federal public service this year?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians elected this government to deliver the priorities important to Canadians, to build Canada strong, to build one economy—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Chair, if the minister does not know the main estimates, I will ask a question he does know.

Since becoming the Treasury Board president, how many briefings has he received?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I was appointed about a month ago, and I have received many briefings, pretty much every—

**The Chair:** The time has elapsed.

The member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

**Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Chair, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio has risen from 2014's 80.5% to 110.8% in 2024, the largest increase in the G7. When does the minister project a balanced budget?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we are committed to balancing our operating budget in the next three years. That is what we are working on.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister has stated he is going to report operating expenditures and capital expenditures separately. Why?



*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, all the details are included in the main estimates. I would advise my colleague to—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, does the minister want to capture potential differential interest rate savings between capital and operational financing?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, if my colleague has any specific questions, I could entertain him on the side, because it is very hard to give a—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, that was a very specific question. Is the minister capturing differential interest rate savings?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we are here to discuss the main estimates 2024-25.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, public debt-servicing charges are forecast to increase from this year's \$46.7 billion to \$49.2 billion, then up to \$55 billion by 2029. Are these projections based on a stable interest rate?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, what I can tell the member is that our debt ratio is 10.1%, and our total budget is—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, will interest rates ever rise again?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, that is up to the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, given what we have witnessed here tonight, where should Canadians get the confidence that Canada will maintain its AAA rating?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, Canadians have confidence in this new government. That is why they elected this new government. That is why they rejected your leader.

**The Chair:** The minister must go through the Chair.

The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, the Liberals say they want to supercharge our economy, yet they are responsible for continued trade irritants with the Americans.

Is the minister aware of the existence for 70 years of the binationally governed and binationally funded Great Lakes Fishery Commission?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, we have a Prime Minister who has a proven record of building economies and uplifting nations, not one or two nations, so he—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is binationally funded through your treasury. Are you aware of it?

**The Chair:** The member must go through the Chair.

The President of the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I can ask the department to provide my colleague the information.

• (2020)

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, is the minister aware of the internationally governed and internationally funded International Joint Commission?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, again, I would refer the member to the minister responsible for that file.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, that is an excellent answer. I will come back to that.

Where would one find in the main estimates how much money flowed to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, the main estimates include \$486 billion—

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Chair, the answer is we cannot find it in the main estimates. We can find, however, on one line, the International Joint Commission because it flows through the Global Affairs budget.

Does the minister agree, supported by independent legal opinion, that flowing funds from the Canadian treasury through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to the fishery commission and then having the Department of Fisheries and Oceans contract with the fishery commission represents a structural conflict of interest?

**Hon. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, I was waiting for my colleague to talk about dental care, pharmacare, day care and the benefits that Canadians have, or about the tax cut for 22 million Canadians and the consumer carbon price removal.

**The Chair:** Time has elapsed.

We have a point of order from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, the minister referred a number of times in his testimony to the 2024-25 estimates as being what he is testifying about. I wonder if he wants to clarify that or if he is—

**The Chair:** That is not a point of order.

Resuming debate, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it has been an interesting process listening to Conservatives attempt to ask their quippy questions in hopes of preventing a minister from being able to answer. I would suggest more responsible questions.

It is interesting that, just last week, every member from the Conservative Party who asked questions tonight actually voted in favour of the ways and means motion. Obviously, if they are voting in favour of it, I think that they would have a general understanding of the estimates and the benefits of going into the estimates, but rather what I heard time and time again was repetition of what the Conservatives had made the decision to debate earlier today.

*Business of Supply*

There has been very limited time, as the election was on April 28, and the Conservatives get only three days before the summer break when they can actually designate the issues for debate. I would ask people who are following the debate to listen to what the Conservative agenda really was today, because I think it is an excellent contrast to what the Prime Minister has actually been doing since the last election.

When I reflect on April 28 and what I was hearing at the doors, it was nothing to do with what the Conservatives have been talking about this evening with the minister, except maybe when they started to talk about the number of civil servants. We know that there is a Pierre Poilievre, Conservative, right-wing hidden agenda that would cut the public service, in terms of numbers. Beyond that, I cannot really see how it is that they were delving into the estimates, which was the ways and means motion they actually voted in favour of just last week. Instead, they wanted to talk about the whole issue of ArriveCAN and Mr. Firth.

It is interesting that the Conservatives were asking whether any money had been collected. A number of members of Parliament, including me, earlier today were talking about that particular issue. In fact, where fraud and overbilling have been clearly demonstrated, GC Strategies is already being pursued in court right now. The Conservatives know that.

It sounds like I am talking to a hollow room, as if absolutely no one on the Conservative benches were actually listening, because, quite frankly, the truth hurts, and not one of them has the courage to deny that. They realize that Pierre Poilievre, their leader, has really missed the mark here.

Let us do the contrast. We have a Prime Minister who, coming out of the election, is saying that people are concerned about Donald Trump, the tariffs, trade, the economy and jobs. These are issues Canadians are concerned about, yet every member of the Conservative Party who stood up today completely ignored those issues, on a day when they got to designate the debate for the day. They were not content with that and instead tried to ask more questions tonight, many of which had already been previously answered, or they were asking the wrong minister.

I find that unfortunate. When the Conservatives are quick to point their finger at this particular new administration, which is what it is, a new Prime Minister and a new administration, they need to reflect on themselves.

Mr. Firth was actually receiving government contracts while Stephen Harper was the prime minister, and guess what: The current Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, was a parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Harper, and at one point he sat around the Harper cabinet table when Mr. Firth and his company were receiving direct grants. However, as they tried to do earlier today, the Conservatives use character assassination and the words “scandal” and “corruption” wherever they can.

● (2025)

They would say that Mr. Firth is government-friendly and Liberal-friendly. Was he Conservative-friendly when Mr. Poilievre's government, the government he was a part of, was giving out money? That was what Conservatives wanted to focus on.

There are a lot of other things that are happening that I would suggest they should be focusing on. Just the other day, we made an announcement and the minister responsible for the Treasury Board made reference to it in terms of DND. For the first time, we are actually moving in that direction in a very quick fashion, in terms of getting the 2% requirement that NATO has been talking about for a generation.

With a new Prime Minister, we have seen a solid commitment toward that. Contrast that with Pierre Poilievre, when he was sitting around that cabinet table. In fact, we will find that the time of Pierre Poilievre was the worst ever. NATO funding was borderline, at just under 1% of GDP. Was that why they did not want to have a healthy discussion on it today, because of his abysmal performance on the whole issue of Canadian Forces?

Conservative members then have the temerity to bring up the issue of housing with the President of the Treasury Board. They had the opportunity to do that when the Minister of Housing was here. Instead, they want to duck and deke over here and see if they can score some political points.

I do not need to remind members of the Conservative Party how abysmal the Conservative Party was under Stephen Harper and Pierre Poilievre during 2010 and 2014, when I sat in the opposition benches. The minister of housing, Pierre Poilievre, was able to build six homes, although I do not know if they were non-profit. I still have not found out where they were built. They believe that they have the moral high ground on housing, yet they were such failures. As a government, they did nothing on the housing file.

For the first time ever, we have a government that not only recognizes the need for the federal government to play a role but is prepared to play a leading role. Modular homes, working with municipalities and the housing accelerator program are the types of programs that are clearly demonstrating that we have a Prime Minister who is committed to the file of housing.

When we we talk about the priorities of Canadians, coming out of the election, we can look at the ministerial mandate letters. They are very clear. Building one Canadian economy is what the Prime Minister has been talking about during the election and even now.

We continue to push that file, whether it is at the meeting of all the first ministers in Saskatchewan or at the G7 meeting coming up, not to mention all of the other discussions that have been taking place, from a number of different ministers, building to make Canada strong.

That is something that we continue to push, because that is what Canadians want us to do. On April 28, we were elected with more votes than any other prime minister or political party has ever received in the history of Canada. That demonstrates action. That is what we as a government have been working on and have been focused on. We continue to look at ways to improve the system.

When we go into the estimates process, I really respect the fact that the opposition members can ask questions about whatever it is that they want, but this is just a continuation of what I would suggest is Pierre Poilievre's misdirection. Conservatives have two leaders. They have one for the House. I do not quite understand why they cannot reflect on the election and go with those focused priorities.

The priorities are in the mandate letters, which talk about tax breaks, border controls and building one strong Canadian economy. If I were to ask one question of the minister responsible for this evening, it would be to ask him to provide his thoughts on the mandate letter, a mandate letter that is the same within all of the departments.

● (2030)

Every minister was given the same mandate letter. Why is this? It is because we have a new Prime Minister with a new administration that is focused on making Canada the strongest country in the G7. We are responding to what Canadians were telling us at the last federal election, and that is what I look forward to continuing over the coming months, and hopefully years, under this new administration.

If the minister wants to provide his thoughts and, if there is still time, I would be interested in him commenting on the mandate letters.

**Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I am truly humbled and honoured to learn from my colleague. He has extensive experience with being a parliamentarian and serving Canadians.

### *Business of Supply*

Also, I have the opportunity to work under the leadership of our Prime Minister, a prime minister who has a legacy that no one else has. It is matchless. He is the only person who was appointed as governor at the national banks of two countries. This is because of his resilience, vision and strength to build economies. He not only helped Canadians avoid a recession a decade ago but also helped the U.K. to get on its feet.

We have an opportunity, and I feel pride to work alongside and under the leadership of our Prime Minister. He has the vision to build Canada strong, the vision to build one economy instead of 13, the vision to invest in our social services and the vision to deliver priorities to Canadians. He has the vision to implement strategies to utilize technology, to improve productivity and to invest more and spend less. He is working to deliver for Canadians by removing the consumer carbon tax and delivering tax breaks to 22 million Canadians, as well as investing in defence to make Canada strong.

I was hopeful my colleagues would ask questions about the main estimates. I wish they could have asked questions about those.

● (2035)

**The Chair:** It being 8:32 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, June 11, all votes are deemed reported to the House. The committee will rise, and I will now leave the chair.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:38 p.m.)



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