



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Public Accounts

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 123**

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

---

Chair: Mr. John Williamson





## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

• (1710)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC)):** I'm going to start with a speaking note.

We are here in committee to discuss the motion of Madame Sinclair-Desgagné, which includes an amendment from Ms. Khalid. You've heard this, but I'm going to read again the information that has been provided to this committee to put it on the public record: "Written responses provided to the committee are not considered to be confidential. Examples of confidential documents include in camera blues; draft calendars; logistics items—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Chair.

Could you start from the top? I know that we had our discussions, but people who are watching may not remember what the motion and the amendment are about.

**The Chair:** I'm going to turn it right over to Madame Sinclair-Desgagné. I'm just setting the table here on this, and then I'm going to hear from members. I want to inform members of the facts, I suppose, as understood by the House of Commons and committees, and then we will hear from members to review the issue at hand.

I'm going to begin at the top: "Written responses provided to the committee are not considered to be confidential. Examples of confidential documents include in camera blues; draft calendars; logistics items such as contracts and catering forms; notices of motion—"

As I said, though, a member is, of course, free to make public their motion any time they see fit—"draft reports and dissenting/supplementary opinions..., witness paperwork, witness lists and any summons."

Madame Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank my colleagues for agreeing to make this meeting public. It is of general interest that a unique situation has arisen in this committee and that fairness be established between the various media, which serve as the fourth estate in Quebec and Canada. I'll read the motion again for those listening.

Given that the information contained in the written response from the Treasury Board Secretariat which was transmitted to committee members on April 15, 2024 appears to have been disclosed to a Globe & Mail journalist, as per the article titled Three

firms tied to ArriveCan app got \$1-billion in federal contracts, Ottawa reveals, published May 13, 2024,

That the Committee make public on its website the said documents sent in the written response from the Treasury Board Secretariat dated April 15, 2024.

I've already expressed the reasons why I'd like to see this issue resolved quickly, so I won't expand on it too much. For questions of fairness, particularly with regard to French-language media who didn't have access to information in French as they should have, when this information and the documents were passed on only to a journalist from an English-language newspaper, it is important that the documents be officially made public. Moreover, since these documents constitute an answer to a question that had been asked in public, there is no problem with their being made public.

I hope my colleagues will agree to this motion so that this situation can be made, shall we say, acceptable and we can move on.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Shanahan, please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank you for the additional information you have provided to the committee regarding which documents are considered confidential and which are not.

I must confess that I, too, was disturbed by the documents being leaked in this way. It's not at all the committee's habit to do this sort of thing. We may have to review our rules at some point. Given the importance of our reports and the way in which we write them, the disclosure of documents that were not necessarily discussed in public and that were provided in writing to the committee may have been detrimental to the committee's good work.

In my opinion, we should vote on the motion shortly.

[English]

**The Chair:** There is a little procedural bump that I have to address.

Ms. Khalid, I'm going to turn to you right after hearing from Mr. Desjarlais, because you have an amendment to the motion and I have to deal with that first, I believe.

Mr. Desjarlais, I believe you asked to speak. You have the floor.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I agree with our Bloc colleague and with my Liberal colleagues that we do need to ensure that the public has access to information. I hope we can get unanimous consent here to ensure the information that is shared with the public is done in an equal and equitable fashion.

There are different media outlets in Quebec, Alberta and across the country. It's important that we make the distribution of these documents fair and equal. It's not okay, to the point of the amendment of Ms. Khalid, that there seems to be a perception that certain documents are given to certain journalists. The question is, in exchange for what? Why do only certain journalists have access to this information for the purpose of a story? It seems to me that it's for a preferential outcome in a story.

I think this nips it in the bud by making all documents related to this issue public and available. I also think it's incumbent upon us now to try to understand what happened here, what took place, why, and who is pulling the strings behind this.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Khalid, you have the floor for anything you'd like to say, but I hope you'll address the amendment as well.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you, Chair.

I believe it is the amendment that is under discussion right now, as per committee procedure.

I don't have much to add to what my NDP colleague, Mr. Desjarlais, has said and what my Liberal colleague, Mrs. Shanahan, has said as well.

I agree 100% with the main motion, but also the amendment, because we do need to understand and appreciate the precedent that we set when documents like this are leaked. We want to make sure the rules by which we govern ourselves are maintained, because ultimately what happens is that witnesses would then be hesitant to come and share information with us, sensitive documents that we, as a committee, may or may not agree to, that then clearly jeopardize what happens among communities in Canada, etc.

I will keep it very brief and end right there, Chair. I would appreciate it if we could go to a vote on the amendment and then the main motion right away.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I would just like to be provided with the text of the amendment, which we have not received. It would be pertinent, I think, if it were in both official languages.

**The Chair:** Very well. Right now, we're trying to figure out the exact wording of the amendment.

[*English*]

In the meantime, Mr. Nater, you have the floor.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

To briefly address the first part, I agree 100%. Conservatives agree 100% to all documents being posted online.

As for the second part, these weren't confidential documents. I'm not sure where Ms. Khalid is coming from with her amendment to instigate an investigation into something that couldn't be leaked, because there was nothing to leak if it was a public document. As our able clerk has distinguished and identified, a written response to a question is not considered confidential to this committee, so if all of a sudden we're going to have an investigation into something that wasn't prohibited, it just seems a little strange. If you want our clerk and chair to waste their time investigating something that was not prohibited, then have at it, but I think it's funny to go that route.

I support the main motion 100%, but I think the amendment is irrelevant. These weren't confidential documents, so the fact that they were provided elsewhere...and frankly, I think we should be more proactively providing these documents more broadly. The questions are asked publicly. We ask witnesses questions. I think we often find that they say they'll get back to us with a written response as a way to avoid answering, and sometimes they don't come. If we have a question that's asked publicly, the response should be provided as publicly as possible too, so that Canadians who I know are tuned in and are eagerly watching our committee on a regular basis have all of the information.

I support 100% putting things online, but to the second part, nothing was confidential, so there was no leak that happened.

**The Chair:** Ms. Khalid, you are next to speak, but I might suspend just for three minutes. It's a suspension so that you, as the sponsor of the amendment, can work with the clerk on the precise wording.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** It's very simple language, Chair.

**The Chair:** Would you like to share it with us?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Yes. It's "and (b), ensure that the committee investigates how these documents were leaked into the public...."

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I am going to suspend and, Ms. Khalid, you're going to speak with the clerk.

I want the amendment to be well written and well understood.

I'm going to suspend to get clarity on this and overcome any hiccups.

Thank you.

We'll back in a few minutes.

• (1720) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1725)

**The Chair:** I will bring the meeting back to order.

The amendment in both official languages has been sent to your emails.

Clerk, why don't you read it so that everyone has it, and then clarify which part is the amendment?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Hilary Smyth):** It reads:

Given that the information contained in the written response from the Treasury Board Secretariat that was transmitted to committee members on April 15, 2024, appears to have been disclosed to a Globe and Mail journalist, as per the article titled "Three firms tied to ArriveCAN app got \$1-billion in federal contracts, Ottawa reveals", published May 13, 2024,

That the committee make public on its website the said documents sent in the written response from the Treasury Board Secretariat dated April 15, 2024; that the committee order the chair to work with the clerk to investigate the divulga-tion of these documents without prior committee consent; and, if appropriate, that repercussions be taken.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Ms. Khalid, you have the floor if you have anything to add to that.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I think it is very well drafted. I am more than happy to go to a vote so we can conclude this matter as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** We'll go there as soon as we have exhausted the speaking list.

Mr. Desjarlais is next.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

My concern with the amendment to the motion as written is this: What if—I'm not saying this was you—the chair was the one who leaked this information? Now, if our chair, who is independent and neutral—much like the Speaker of the House of Commons—engaged in any activity that could benefit a party or used their discretion to benefit a political party, that would be a concern regarding this amendment. If the person investigating is the same person who has committed this...

For those reasons, I would like the committee to propose a solution to this obvious predicament.

**The Chair:** I have a speaking list, but let's wait one second.

I'm going to respond to this, because I can see your point.

I'm going to tell you up front, for what it's worth, that it was not me. You can take that to the bank. I have tried to conduct myself honourably in the committee and my word is all I have as we work together. The clerk tells me we are working together on this.

I will tell you my view as well. My view is that the documents are not confidential. My view—and I asked the clerk—is that once the story in The Globe and Mail appeared, any journalist who contacts the committee should be given the documents. The clerk in her wisdom counselled me not to do that, so I did not do that. However, my view of these documents is that written responses to an

oral question are not confidential documents. Once they receive them, members are free to transmit them freely.

Not only do I think there is no infraction here, but I will also re-assert that it was not me.

That said, the amendment to the motion is what it is. You are welcome to an amendment, but my starting point is that documents that come to this committee in response to public meetings.... The witnesses were not able to give us an answer on the spot, which would have been on the public record. They therefore agreed to provide a written response. This is, in fact, no different from a public answer that is on the record and publicly transmitted. Here we had a written response.

That is my view, and I believe this to be the case for every committee, not just public accounts. My view is that members are free to do what we all do as lawmakers, which is to study them if they think there's some information to work with. That's my view, just to give you my perspective and what I think.

I recognize that my job is to safeguard the committee and I understand that it is important for the information to be given to you in order for you to decide how to use that going forward. I have answered your concern, or at least addressed it—maybe I haven't answered it.

I will turn to Madame Sinclair-Desgagné and then to anyone else.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I have nothing to add. I would just like us to proceed with the vote as soon as possible.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I appreciate that.

Ms. Khalid, did you have...?

Okay. I'm going to call the vote on the amendment to the motion.

**Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC):** Call the vote, then. I think it's important.

**The Chair:** Mr. Stewart, I did call the vote on the amendment. To maintain discipline, the vote has been called on the amendment to the motion.

Clerk, please proceed.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 9; nays 1)

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Stewart. Then I will recognize Madame Sinclair-Desgagné.

Go ahead, Mr. Stewart.

• (1735)

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Allow me to complete the investigation for you.

Said journalist reached out to members of Parliament who are not on the committee. He reached out to me. I sought advice to know if it was public information. I was told it was, and I forwarded the information to a journalist I've never met before. That's the truth.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] talk about it?

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Well, because everyone was—

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** You could have asked us. We would have let you.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** I told the truth—

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I would have let you release the document.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** —and now you have it.

The truth is—and this is important—I have no idea who the journalist is. I never met him. I never worked with him. He clearly wanted the information, and I did the due diligence to find out that it was public. Once I found out that it was public, I thought, “Well, there can't be anything wrong with it”, so I sent it to him. That was it—true story.

**The Chair:** There you are.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I do appreciate that honesty, Mr. Chair. Honourable—

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** I'm sorry that I didn't say it earlier. When I thought it was public, I didn't think we would be bothered, so I just.... That's the truth.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** It's just that they left out Nathalie.

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

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I was the only one.

**The Chair:** Order.

We are back to Madame Sinclair-Desgagné's motion. Is there any more debate on that?

Let's call the vote on that, please.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** It passes. Obviously there still is the matter of the amendment, and the clerk and I will investigate that and report back to the committee.

Ms. Shanahan, is this related to the motion? I'm recognizing Madame—

Is it related to this motion?

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** It is, Chair.

**An hon. member:** The motion passed, Chair.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** It passed.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to Madame Sinclair-Desgagné and then I'll come to you, Mrs. Shanahan.

Go ahead, Madame Sinclair-Desgagné.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I thank my colleagues for supporting this motion, and I thank the francophone media, who will now have access to these documents.

The issue of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is one that is very close to my heart and one that I have discussed with several members here.

We all agreed to invite its representatives. In their response, I think they completely disregarded what had been discussed in committee. It's a real pity and perhaps represents a lack of seriousness on their part, because we had discussed very openly the fact that the RCMP would not specifically be asked questions about the investigation. Everyone agreed on that. However, the RCMP could provide us with information on how they proceed with investigations such as the ArriveCAN investigation by means of examples so as to inform this committee and the general public, who want to know how this whole saga will end.

At the moment, all we're hearing is that the RCMP is conducting an investigation. It's all in the RCMP's hands. I think the whole population has a right to know what's going to happen. I feel the RCMP's response shows a total lack of respect for the work of this committee and for the trust the public has placed in them to investigate the ArriveCAN saga and the highly questionable behaviour of certain individuals, companies and public servants. I think it's important for the RCMP to appear before this committee. The RCMP is first and foremost a public service paid for by taxpayers. It must therefore answer certain questions.

I would like, with the unanimous consent of the committee, to reinstate the RCMP emphatically, as we have done for departments or agencies, to come before this committee and answer questions. We all agreed. We all voted in favour of the motion I put forward. I think it's important that the RCMP come in to finally bring the whole ArriveCAN saga full circle.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Shanahan, I will recognize you, but just for everyone's awareness, yes, you all received correspondence from the RCMP that they have declined our invitation to appear. Now the discussion is on if we wish to pursue this further.

Ms. Shanahan, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I remember very well the discussion we had about the RCMP. In my opinion, we wanted them to testify for educational purposes.

However, Mr. Chair, there's another subject that bothers me a lot. I think this subject is important for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

It came to light today that members of Parliament declared expenses to go to a partisan convention, saying it was some sort of caucus meeting, but without providing any details or transparency about the nature of their expenses.

• (1740)

[English]

Every MP's office is paid for and supported by taxpayers' dollars. You know that very well, Chair, having yourself served as an advocate for Canadian taxpayers with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

We learned today that it was the Conservative Party of Canada that was the largest user of taxpayer funds, subsidizing the travel expenses of their MPs, family members and staff to effectively attend a Conservative Party convention in Quebec City. It's very disappointing to learn this, especially when the Conservatives pride themselves on being guardians of the public purse, yet we see this flagrant misuse of parliamentary funds.

We don't have to go very far. It's very apropos that we've been discussing media and media coverage of different issues, Mr. Chair, and rightly so. The public accounts committee needs to be concerned with the use of taxpayer funds. Conservative MPs have racked up hundreds of thousands of dollars in expenses to bring their spouses and staff to political events. That is something that needs... We're not talking about just a few dollars here; we're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Chair, I believe you were a member of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, or a director or something. It's something that I know you're very proud of and that you have made reference to in your career. The Taxpayers Federation has called for the money billed to the House of Commons, through what is effectively a loophole, to be reimbursed in whole or in part. It stated that "Taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing politicians—"

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Shanahan. I did let you speak for a little while, though.

I'd like us to conclude the discussion on my proposal to reinstate the RCMP representatives. Let's agree on that, and then we can move on to the topic you want to raise. We have to proceed in the order in which topics are raised, so I'd like us to conclude the discussion on the RCMP issue, please.

[English]

**The Chair:** At this point, Mrs. Shanahan does have the floor.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Desjarlais.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I think it's just a matter of procedure that the topic of the letter was brought up first. I don't mean to prejudice against the important statements you're making, Mrs. Shanahan. It's just a matter of procedure, I believe, but the important issue is to make sure the RCMP are present here to answer our questions on ArriveCAN, and their investigation is important.

Maybe all that's required, Chair, is a confirmation on your part that we will send them a letter, in effect, as a response to what they said, and then we can continue on with Mrs. Shanahan, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, I do need a little bit more guidance than that. I'm certainly open to doing that, but at this point, Mrs. Shanahan does have the floor. I recognize, Madame Sinclair-Desgagné, that you were trying to make a helpful suggestion to begin the process, but a motion was not moved.

Mrs. Shanahan has the floor in committee business, so she will continue with her illuminating concern about tax dollars.

• (1745)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Rest assured that I will be moving a motion. I just wanted to outline what our concerns are. I have been looking to speak on this for quite a while.

Just to finish what was said by Franco Terrazzano, federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation:

Taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing politicians to go to their political conventions. Political parties have a lot of money. Politicians have a lot of money. Normal working people don't. So this was wrong and the money needs to be paid back.

Mr. Franco Terrazzano is always a very frank speaker.

He's not the only advocate in this area who has spoken out on this and who is very cognizant that if there is a loophole, it should not exist. We also heard from Duff Conacher, the co-founder of Democracy Watch, who also called for the loophole to be eliminated.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** "The loophole never should have been put—"

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Shanahan.

We are listening, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I'd like to question your decision and return to the subject of the RCMP, please.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to consult with the clerk on this. The chair is being challenged, but challenges normally come from the other side of the table. Give me one second, please.

All right. It's non-debatable.

Go ahead, clerk.

**The Clerk:** Shall the chair's ruling be sustained?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 5; nays 5).

**The Clerk:** You can do whatever you want.

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

**The Chair:** Madame Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor again.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like the committee's opinion. I think we've heard from Mr. Desjarlais on the matter.

[English]

**The Chair:** Is there a point of order? No...?

[Translation]

Excuse me. Please continue.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I would just like to hear the opinion of my colleagues on the possibility of reinviting the RCMP insistently to come and explain itself.

[English]

**The Chair:** The chair strongly advises you to put a motion forward if you want this to continue.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Very well; I move that we reinvite the RCMP and firmly insist that they explain their investigative procedures to the committee. The motion I proposed can be repeated verbatim. It's about reinviting its representatives so that they understand the importance of their presence on this committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** While the clerk is...

**The Clerk:** Do you want the language, or is it understood?

**The Chair:** No, I think you had better send the language around to be safe and to go by the book.

I have Ms. Khalid on the list, and then Mr. Nater.

Ms. Khalid, are you ready to speak to it now, or would you prefer to see the text of the motion?

• (1750)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I would prefer to see the text, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's fine. That is your right.

I'm going to suspend for three to four minutes, depending on how long it takes, so just bear with us. We'll come back very shortly.

• (1750)

(Pause)

• (1750)

**The Chair:** I call this very public meeting back to order.

Ms. Khalid, the motion has been sent to you and to all committee members.

Ms. Khalid, you have the floor.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this. Quite frankly, I don't disagree with the intentions and the spirit of all of my colleagues at this table. In fact, the purpose of public accounts is to ensure that there is accountability when it comes to purses and how our public dollars are spent.

Chair, what these nine years as a member of Parliament have really reinforced for me is what we can do and what we can't do. The division of powers is significant.

We all know at this table that an active RCMP investigation is ongoing. We know for a fact that RCMP officers, or whoever the RCMP sends as representatives, will come to this table and say time and time again they cannot answer our questions because this is a public or ongoing investigation. Knowing that at the outset, why are we wasting taxpayer dollars to have this meeting in the first place? Why not wait until the investigation is over so that our committee can actually find out what went wrong and how we can provide recommendations to fix the process that went wrong?

As members of this committee, we do not have the right, or even the jurisdiction, to take over what is an RCMP investigation, Chair. We have to respect the division of powers and we have to respect the public purse, which is exactly why we have this committee in the first place.

When we're asking the RCMP to come here to talk about an open investigation, knowing full well beforehand that they cannot answer any questions on the public dollars or on an open investigation, either we're grandstanding on an issue and trying to take political points for whatever they may be worth or we just don't understand parliamentary procedure. I would credit all of the colleagues at this table with understanding what parliamentary procedure is.

At this point in time, I feel this is a waste of resources for us, knowing full well what the RCMP is going to come and say about an open investigation and its inability to answer any questions about it. For the RCMP to have to come and sit here and say again and again, "We can't answer. We can't answer. We can't answer"....

We know that after the investigation is over, we can have a thorough discussion on all of this. We can ask those questions and we can talk about procedure and we can talk about fixing how things are done and how procurement happens, etc.

How do we justify this? How do we justify political grandstanding right now?

Yes, I agree 100% that the RCMP should be coming to this committee to talk to us about how we can work to make sure that we are holding the public purse in the safety that it should be held in. That's the whole purpose of our committee. However, knowing beforehand that the RCMP is not going to be able to answer the questions we want them to answer, and still grandstanding.... I find that to be a little bit disingenuous, Chair.

Again, I have no opposition to the RCMP coming to this committee. I have no opposition to their coming and helping us understand how we can improve, but knowing full well that they cannot answer any questions and still inviting them anyway, while there's an open investigation going on.... I'm really not sure what we're trying to achieve here, Chair.

I'll stop there.

• (1755)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next is Mr. Nater.



**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you very much, Chair. I'll be brief.

I don't see any challenges in simply reissuing an invitation to our friends at the RCMP. These are law enforcement professionals. They know what they're doing. They know which questions they can answer and which questions they can't answer. If it will reassure folks, there's no problem with having a meeting, as it has been done in other committees, in which part of the meeting is in camera and part of it is in public.

There are a lot of questions out there, and I think the RCMP will answer what's viable for them to answer and decline to answer in public what they can't answer if it's an ongoing investigation. However, there are a lot of questions, so from our perspective, there aren't any concerns with reissuing a letter to invite the RCMP. We're not sending the Sergeant-at-Arms after them to compel them to come here; we're simply sending a letter to reinvite them.

I would say we support the motion, and go from there.

Thanks, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I am keeping a list and I have four members on it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, it's your turn.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** I think it's a shame that we're ultimately debating my original motion again. After all, the arguments we're hearing are the ones we heard before. There's absolutely no point in hearing them again. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police will be in a position to say whether or not they can answer questions. Many people, namely the public we represent, are wondering how an RCMP investigation works.

Of course, we won't receive answers about specific details of the investigation. It's up to us as parliamentarians to use our time wisely and ask other questions.

I don't see why we're even debating a proposal to simply invite RCMP representatives back.

• (1800)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

The next speaker is Mr. Desjarlais.

You have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Like my colleagues from the Conservatives and the Bloc, I agree that it's a matter of principle, particularly as Parliament requires answers. To the point that Ms. Khalid made about the RCMP finding that they are unable to answer, I believe it's appropriate for them to be able to make that statement to the member who is asking the question.

It's important to know that we are not administrators in the same purpose for section 91 of the Constitution Act, which doesn't prescribe that we're making decisions for the purpose of the administration of government here; we're working for a Parliament that de-

mands accountability. In this particular instance, the RCMP is involved in this work, and, should they be unable to answer a question from a member, they can simply say so.

The point of frustration that I have, Chair, is that the RCMP could be making the very same arguments, or not making the arguments, made by the Liberals. I think it doesn't do any harm to an investigation if we ask questions about their investigation and if they respond by saying they can't respond because of that investigation. If that's ultimately what they say, then that will be their submission to our report, but the options for the RCMP to decline the opportunity to even make mention of the process or their challenges or to say that they want to submit nothing are not present to vote on.

Chair, these are my final remarks on this issue. I hope that we have unanimous consent to do this, and I call for a vote as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Shanahan, you have the floor, please.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

I just want to point out—but I do have something to say on this motion—that I'd like the clerk to check the rules and procedures in chapter 20. I believe there's something about the chair's ruling being sustained when there is a challenge to the chair and there are equal numbers of votes. I'm being a good sport about this, but I think it's highly unusual for a chair to vote against his own ruling, and I'd like to see that further investigated.

I have something that I want to say about this motion before us, because I find it—I'm sorry—very disingenuous. We've discussed this before, and I think that we need to be mindful, as members of Parliament, of protecting the integrity of the investigation. I don't think anyone wants to see the investigation compromised, so I propose the following amendment.

I think we have to delete the last line—"within three weeks of this motion" and add "in order to protect the integrity of the investigation, that the RCMP appear after the investigation is concluded".

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask you to send that to the clerk right away.

I'm going to suspend for one minute. The clerk is merely a mortal—a super-mortal, like the rest of us—but I'm going to have you send that amendment, and because she's presently occupied, I'm going to suspend for a minute.

• (1800)

(Pause)

• (1810)

**The Chair:** I'm bringing the meeting back into session.

Mrs. Shanahan, we have received your amendment and we've sent it out to all the members. You have the floor again.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, in keeping with the spirit of the meeting, I think we have been open to hearing testimony from the RCMP, but the very last thing we want to do.... I don't think there's any member here who wants to interfere with the investigation. We can see a scenario in which the accused are in court and they're going to point to information that was given by the RCMP out of turn. I'm not a lawyer myself, but I can imagine somebody would have a field day with that kind of public testimony.

I don't have the original letter, but I believe we did seek to ensure that was with the RCMP. We acknowledge that they have their job to do and that it's important to do. That is why I'm putting forward this amendment; it's because our report won't be done.

Once the investigation is completed, the RCMP can come and see us. We can certainly continue that part of the work at that time. We have other reports and studies that have been going on for months, if not years, so I don't think it's a question of urgency in this matter.

I'll leave it there, Chair.

• (1815)

**The Chair:** I have Ms. Khalid.

I also have information from the law clerk that I want to flag. It could take us down another path, which is to hear from him. It doesn't rule your amendment out of order—far from it—but I believe there's an issue with the amendment in that when the investigation is over, if charges are laid, then of course it goes before the courts. I'm not sure where that leaves us in terms of hearing from the RCMP. I'm just going to say that.

Ms. Khalid, you have the floor on the amendment to the motion.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Chair, I support this amendment and I don't have much more than that to say.

Let's go to a vote.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid there is still a speaking list, so we will get there. I have two now.

Mr. Nater, you're up.

**Mr. John Nater:** I won't be too long on this, other than to say the amendment is just basically pushing off an appearance until who knows when.

I believe Mrs. Shanahan was being rather rude to my friend Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné in saying that she was being disingenuous earlier, but I think—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Don't impugn motives.

[*Translation*]

We are friends.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** It's back to you, Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Chair.

It's always unfortunate when Mrs. Shanahan feels the need to interrupt everyone at this committee. She does that regularly, but—

**The Chair:** I hear points of order from both sides. I'm happy to do so.

Mr. Nater, I'll ask you to return to the amendment to the motion, please.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Chair.

Very briefly, the impact of this amendment is to ensure that we don't hear from this witness and that we will be long delayed from the pertinence of this matter by the time we would see the RCMP before this committee, so I do not support the amendment. We'll be voting against it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Desjarlais, before I go to Ms. Ferreri, was your hand up or were you kind of just waving for a vote?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I'm just calling for a vote.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's fine.

I do have you down, Ms. Khalid, but I saw Mr. Desjarlais and I thought he might be looking to move things along.

Ms. Ferreri, you have the floor, please.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thanks for having me at public accounts.

It's obviously my first time here. I'm just chiming in as I see this. I sit on two other committees, and one of the big issues, obviously, is ArriveCAN with the ongoing investigation and the historic appearance before the bar of GC Strategies' CEO.

I don't understand the perspective of the Liberals today. I hear their reasoning, but it doesn't really make sense. If we're here to work for the people, why wouldn't we want to have an update from the RCMP? This is probably one of the biggest scandals that's ever happened certainly in my time. An app that was supposed to cost \$80,000 cost \$60 million. It was the first time in over 110 years where somebody was called before the bar. This obviously is something that is very important to Canadians. I can't see why we wouldn't want this to happen.

That would be my two cents, as somebody who's just coming from the outside. This is probably one of the biggest issues that we've seen in Canadian history. It just doesn't make any sense to me why you wouldn't want the RCMP to give an update to people and see where it's at.

The other piece to this that I think is really important is it is taxpayers' money. That's a really big issue when you have a cost of living crisis. People can't afford to live. They're using food banks. They have nowhere to live. There are tent cities and all of those things.

That app did things to people psychologically. They went to hotel quarantines. It caused a lot of psychological stress and division in our country and among people. They're still healing.

It just seems it is really important to the people watching at home, whom we work for and who elected us. I would like this motion to pass and see the RCMP come before the summer so that we get that update.

• (1820)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Khalid, you have the floor.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll address this very quickly. A number of points have been raised by my colleagues.

First and foremost, nobody is saying that the RCMP should not come to this committee to be held accountable and help us understand how this investigation has been going. What we're trying to say with this amendment is that the RCMP sent us a letter, and we are respecting their jurisdiction and limitations.

If our committee genuinely wants answers rather than grandstanding, then we need to delay when they come in. If we have them in within this week while the investigation is still ongoing, we are not going to get the answers that members of this committee want. To me, on a practical basis, it makes no sense whatsoever for us to haul them in only to have them say again and again that they can't answer the questions because there is an active, ongoing investigation, which we all want to be concluded. None of us should be wanting to politicize an independent investigation by the RCMP. That is why we are introducing this amendment.

I'm really hoping that we can go to a vote, Chair.

**The Chair:** We can.

Clerk, call the vote on the amendment to the motion, please.

It is a tie. The chair votes no.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The amendment is defeated.

We now return to the motion at hand, as tabled by Madame Sinclair-Desgagné.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The motion is passed.

Mrs. Shanahan, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad that we're able to get back to the motion that I wish to propose here.

Members heard my preamble and the concern that I have about this flagrant disregard for public funds exercised by Pierre Poilievre's Conservative Party. These members of Parliament like to talk a good talk, but when it comes to walking the walk, it's a different story.

I move the following motion: "That the committee immediately conduct a study into the flagrant disregard for public funds exercised by Pierre Poilievre's Conservative Party of Canada members of Parliament, who expensed their travel costs, hotels, and per diems to travel to Quebec City for the Conservative Party of Canada partisan convention in September 2023, as a matter of public interest, and report its findings to the House."

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

I also have the French version. There are copies for everyone.

**The Chair:** That's very good.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shanahan, we have copies. Thank you very much. They've been distributed.

Did you send it electronically? If you didn't, that's fine.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have not.

**The Chair:** If you did, we'd send it out. I'm asking just so we're not looking for it. As I said, I am the ref of the European football league.

I have a speaking list already. Everyone has the motion, so we're going to get going here.

Ms. Ferreri, you have the floor, please.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you so much.

There's a motion put forward. Again, I'm new to public accounts, so it is interesting to me that a motion was put forward by a Liberal member worried about taxpayers' money. It's interesting, to put it mildly, after we were just trying to get the RCMP to testify here—and the Liberals did not want that before committee—about an app that we know cost at least \$60 million, but there's more. There is this motion "That the committee immediately conduct a study into the flagrant disregard for public funds exercised by Conservative Party of Canada member of Parliament".

If this member is really serious here—because she said "talk the talk, walk the walk"—I hope we can add a couple of amendments, obviously, about the Prime Minister's \$6,000-a-night stay in London, as well as his very extravagant trip to Jamaica, which cost taxpayers.... I'm not sure how much that was. However, if we're going to walk the walk and we're going to talk about being very mindful of taxpayers' money, I think we should add that into this study, and Tofino. Thank you so much to my NDP colleague here. I think that we should add a few things if we're going to do this, because I think that would only be fair if we're going to talk about spending taxpayers' money.

I think there's also a green slush fund, if we want to do that on taxpayers' money. There's that \$4.5-billion mental health transfer that never happened, and then there was the money that was spent to reduce chronic homelessness, which hasn't been spent. Should we go on here, Chair, in terms of misuse of taxpayers' money?

Right now, we're spending more on servicing the debt in this country, because of the Prime Minister's mismanagement of taxpayers' money, than we are on health care. If the Liberal member is truly serious about this, that would be a really great thing, because I think, absolutely, that we as elected members of Parliament want to ensure that the money is accounted for and is being fiscally spent. There are a lot of things we can add to this motion, and I'm curious to see if the member opposite is open to that, if she really wants to walk the walk.

Obviously, let's throw in arrive scam because, again, \$60 million—that's being low—is what is expected, when it was supposed to cost \$80,000.

• (1830)

**The Chair:** I have quite a long speaking list.

Mr. Nater, you have the floor, please.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Chair.

It is a very curious motion, I might say, and somewhat surprising, because just last week the Liberals filibustered a meeting on arrive scam, for about 45 minutes to an hour, to avoid hearing from witnesses, all for the supposed intent of working out a work plan, a work plan that this committee agreed to and that the chair agreed to and that put things into play. It's rather curious—or comical, if it weren't so serious—that now, all of a sudden, Ms. Shanahan, the Liberal national caucus chair, has decided to put forward a motion about another opposition party's attendance at a national caucus meeting.

It's especially interesting that Ms. Shanahan—

**The Chair:** Order, please.

**Mr. John Nater:** —the Liberal caucus chair, moved this motion. It's interesting, given her \$5,149.02-expense for regional or national caucus meetings in Whitehorse—so that was \$5,149—and there was another \$1,257 for Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland....

I see that Ms. Shanahan is....

It seems I'm being heckled, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Order.

Just hold on one second, Mr. Nater.

Again, we have a nice long list, and I will add people to it.

You have the floor again, Mr. Nater.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I do have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Oh, pardon me. I thought you were....

Go ahead, Madam Khalid.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you.

I encourage our members to talk with relevance. In fact, members on the Conservative side have listed out things that have been

litigated in committees, front, back and centre—all of it. What this specific motion is asking for is brand spanking new. It is something that has not been discussed, and I think that members should stick to this, because at the end of the day, all parliamentarians are accountable.

**The Chair:** That is true.

I'm going to turn things over to Mr. Nater. You seem to be objecting to his tying it to a national caucus. I'm sure Mr. Nater is going to get to the point that there was a national caucus and meeting in Quebec.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Desjarlais?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** It's not a point of order. It's the speaking list. Am I on it?

**The Chair:** You're on it now.

Mr. Nater, you have the floor, please.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Chair.

Before I was interrupted by points of order from the Liberals, I was articulating that Ms. Shanahan, as national caucus chair, did expend significant amounts of money to attend caucus meetings.

I would note further that the Members By-Law, which is a matter that falls under BOIE, the Board of Internal Economy, would be responsible for this. I see Ms. Shanahan wants to distract from the government's disastrous arrive scam ineptitude, where an app that should have cost a few hundred thousand dollars ballooned to \$60 million of taxpayer dollars and an RCMP investigation. I can see why she wants to distract from that.

The fact is that the board rules that the members' bylaws permit members to attend national caucus meetings, which are typically all-day events held at different points in time. We call them caucus retreats or caucus meetings, but they are caucus matters. As some colleagues may or may not know, in a past life I have been working on a long-delayed Ph.D. dissertation on caucus meetings, so I do have some familiarity with caucus meetings from all parties, frankly, from a number of decades gone by.

I would point out, first of all, that this is a matter that is there. Members attend caucus meetings. That's part of our parliamentary functions. Frankly, if we look at past Speakers' rulings, we've actually seen various Speakers, including Mr. Speaker Regan, a Liberal Speaker—not that it matters—ruling on occasion, two Parliaments ago, that caucus meetings do indeed constitute a part of parliamentary functions. All of a sudden the Liberals think that we're going to have some kind of investigation into the meetings of caucuses. It seems rather interesting and, again, comical, given the timing, that they want to do this.

Obviously, there are caucus meetings held at various points in time. I know the Liberals enjoyed a wonderful caucus meeting in St. Andrews-by-the-Sea. Perhaps Mr. Stewart can tell us about that lovely location, but they do happen at various locations in the country. When matters happen, we follow the members' procedural by-laws that provide clarity and certainty. Expenses that are eligible are one thing, and expenses that aren't eligible aren't permitted. The bylaw clearly states that national caucus meetings and regional caucus meetings are permitted, as we know from Ms. Shanahan's own expense claims about her attendance at various matters.

I really don't know what this is, especially since this is not an issue for public accounts. This is a Board of Internal Economy issue. However, once again, what we're seeing here is a Liberal attempt to cover up the malfeasance that we've seen with ArriveCAN. At every meeting we've seen in these last few weeks, every time we see new allegations, whether it's from Erin O'Gorman as the current president of the CBSA or John Ossowski as the former president, we see a flagrant disregard for taxpayer funds—a complete disregard.

• (1835)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** It's just relevance to the motion. I just want to point out Mr. Nater's expensing of \$2,117 for a partisan convention—

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order. You're splitting....

Mr. Nater, you have the floor, if you could just stay on point.

**Mr. John Nater:** Not that it's relevant, Mr. Chair, but if Ms. Shanahan looked at that, she would notice that I flew in the night before the caucus meeting and left the next day after the caucus meeting, not that she would want to worry about details like that. Obviously she's never let facts get in the way of a good partisan job, but that's for her to live with and not for me.

My expenses are all a matter of the public record, and I am more than happy to defend attending caucus meetings where we are committed as a Conservative caucus to axing the tax, building homes, fixing the budget and stopping crime. That's what we're focused on. We're not focused on the Liberal cover-up that we're seeing, not only with this motion but with their complete and utter disregard for the findings of the Auditor General and trying to disrupt the meeting every time.

Ms. Shanahan calls for relevance. Well, this is relevant. It is relevant because this is being used by the Liberal members on this committee, by the Liberal national caucus chair, to try to distract and change the subject matter for upcoming meetings, especially after they made such a silly, comical display last week to reinforce what the chair had already decided.

I think this is nothing more than a Liberal attempt to distract away from the real matter, which is, of course, arrive scam, and I will leave my comments there, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Bradford, I believe you have the floor. Thank you.

**Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we should clarify that the problem arises when certain parties have a habit of pairing up a caucus meeting with a political convention. That's where the difficulty arises. The Liberal Party hasn't done that since prior to the 2014 convention held in Montreal. We don't pair caucus meetings with conventions.

I'm not sure if Mr. Nater didn't attend that Conservative convention that was held in conjunction with the caucus meeting in Quebec City in September 2023. I suspect that he did attend the convention, since he was there, so it turns out that for the three members who are here today, Mr. Nater cost \$2,117.18., Ms. Ferreri cost \$3,893.24 and Mr. Williamson cost \$1,846.81.

These three members alone, who are sitting here today, represent \$8,367.11 by attending a political convention that was held in conjunction with caucus, and that is not the intention for the use of House of Commons' money. It's not to be used for political purposes at all.

I'd like to draw your attention to Geneviève Tellier, a professor of political studies at the University of Ottawa. A CBC article quotes her:

Parliament makes a distinction between the parliamentary and the political activities of MPs for a reason, but the House of Commons is also free to adopt its own rules.

The decision is a bit surprising for me because I would have thought that there may be other priorities, other needs within Parliament that need funding, but they don't have the funding to do so.

The article continues:

Tellier also questioned why Conservative MPs are billing the House of Commons for travel to a party convention, including by designated travellers, when the party's coffers are well stocked.

Designated travellers would be people's spouses, etc.

The article says that she felt that it would be better for them to set the example and say that we don't go that way, we don't authorize that type of spending. They have the money anyway to pay for the travel of people that they want for the convention from party funds.

I'm making the point that the Conservatives did do this at that convention. It's an example. I believe that's why Ms. Shanahan is bringing forward this motion today for us to consider. We should have a look at this, because it is a misuse of money. Money is being directed to partisan events because they're being held in conjunction with the caucus, and they're using that caucus excuse to get the travel expenses for themselves and their designated travellers to get to the political convention.

• (1840)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Sorbara, you have the floor.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Chair. I think this is the first opportunity I've had to engage in the debate today at the committee.

When I look at the motion from my colleague Mrs. Shanahan with regard to the matter at hand and the sentiment expressed in the flagrant disregard for public funds exercised by Pierre Poilievre's Conservative Party of Canada and its members of Parliament, Chair, it goes to the heart of the matter, which is that we as parliamentarians have responsibilities when we travel to events and travel outside our constituency offices.

In this case here, when we members have caucus meetings, we travel to those caucus meetings at wherever they're scheduled across this beautiful country that we're all blessed to call home, but they're not conventions. They're not political conventions where then you can tack on an extra day or two here or there.

Where I grew up in northern British Columbia, this is seen as playing loosey-goosey with the rules and how you interpret them. I know Mr. Stewart's from New Brunswick, if I remember correctly, and my sister-in-law's from that area. Growing up in northern B.C., in terms of how you've interpreted the rules in this type of thing, you try to get away with something until you're caught with your hand in the cookie jar.

I've gone to political conventions since 1988. I believe that was my first one as a private citizen, and now for the last nine years I've gone as an elected official. When you go to political conventions, expenses are paid with your own funds or they're paid through a process in your electoral district association, your EDA. In no way have we gone to a political convention and then tacked on a day and said that we're going to bring individuals with us and charge it back to, ultimately, the taxpayers of Canada. I think that is wrong.

Here, with reference to Ms. Shanahan's, motion with regard to the Quebec City convention, it was a full-fledged political convention. To then say that they were going to have a day of caucus meetings or so forth and then charge expenses back on that is, I think, to be blunt, very unacceptable.

The issue at hand is that the events should be separate, and fully separate. If I'm looking at a Venn diagram, the circles should not cross in any matter at all, and this time they did cross. Somebody interpreted the rules and said that they thought they could get away with this, and now they're saying, "Wait a second; I think that's actually wrong. It may be within the rules, but it actually does not pass the smell test."

As parliamentarians, we're all here to do better and to do the best we can for our constituents, taxpayers and voters of this country. In this regard, it's not putting the matter of the public interest at heart. It's not being what I would say is the best that we can all be as parliamentarians, Chair.

When I read these stories as reported by the media, I was actually thinking about this. I was thinking, "How would that work and why would they do that?" They went to a political convention and they tacked on an extra day and then charged it back to the Government of Canada or their MOBs, their member's office budget.

There needs to be that separation. I fully think there needs to be a separation.

As a parliamentarian, I like to learn and I like to always do what I can for my constituents and do better. I think we all, as parliamentarians, read the rules that we're governed under and we all act accordingly. We act according to the best of our ability, but I think that in this case here, somebody thought, "I think we can do this. It may not pass the smell test and I may not be able to explain it, but I think I can try to get away with it."

That's not right. That's not the way we raise our children. Most certainly, that's not the way I'm going to raise my kids. In fact, for all the political conventions we've gone to, at all my caucus meetings, I can actually flatly say that we—my wife and I—made a plan to not bring our family members to them, to keep them always separate. We don't like to conflate that matter. Even on occurrences when folks come to visit me in Ottawa, we actually pay our own expenses.

● (1845)

I think that's the right thing to do. I think we have those dependent traveller points and stuff like that, and that's fine; people have a right to do that. I see people bringing their spouses and partners and so forth on flights. We all choose what we want to do and how we wish to act and comport ourselves as parliamentarians. That's within our purview, and I'm not here to judge other folks. At the same time, we all represent our constituencies and the taxpayers within those constituencies.

In this case here, again, the flagrant disregard for public funds is unfortunate. I think folks could have done better on this front. There is a separation between a party's political convention and the caucus meetings that were tacked on, so claiming expenses back to your MOB is, I think, wrong, unfortunately. Much to my chagrin, when I read that story, I think a lot of well-intentioned MPs looked at that and made it a practice, but when you take a step back, it's probably not the most prudent way of managing things.

I'm going to stop there; I have said my piece on this front. I think we need to be stewards of the till. I know, Chair, given your background—I think you were the president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation or something to that effect, and if I'm wrong, please correct me—you have always wanted to act in the best interests of taxpayers in your province of New Brunswick and across the country, and I have that bent as well with the background I bring to Parliament and how I see things.

With that, I would like to thank Ms. Shanahan for bringing forward this motion. I think it is a great motion and I hope we have a chance to continue debating it to see where we go from here, what the will of the committee is and what we wish to do with it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Stewart, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a few things that I want to add.

In Saint John, New Brunswick, in September 2022, Mr. Sorbara spent \$2,330.62. As well, in Whitehorse, Mrs. Shanahan spent, I believe, in excess of \$5,000.

I also want to raise something else here, Mr. Chair. I think it's important. The Liberal party's caucus retreat in New Brunswick in 2022 cost taxpayers \$428,000 and change. Some of it was billed to the House of Commons, and some expenses for staffers in ministers' offices and the Prime Minister's office were billed to those offices. Also, the figures included \$43,292 in expenses for MPs' designated travellers.

I also want to mention the Prime Minister's trip to, I believe, Montana. Before they added the RCMP costs and the police detail that would travel with the Prime Minister, I believe it exceeded \$400,000. It could have been half a million dollars, but in my mind it's at least \$400,000.

I think that if we're going to throw stones, we should understand what we've done ourselves. Listen, we've been dealing with a billion-dollar slush fund and a \$60-some-million ArriveCAN scandal. One contractor got \$20 million. I think it's quite rich that the Liberal party could spend that much in St. Andrews-by-the-Sea, I believe, which is a very beautiful part of New Brunswick. However, that's \$400,000. Considering that a weekend national caucus meeting is being discussed here before the committee, I think it's very interesting that the Liberals would actually go this route, judging from their own record. That is perhaps the strangest aspect of this meeting here today.

The Liberals' record on spending on hotel costs and what's being billed to the taxpayer has been, on occasion, so alarming that it's spent numerous days on the front page. I think all of Canada has been quite perplexed by the idea of a \$90,000 Jamaican vacation, a half-million-dollar Montana vacation and a \$400,000 caucus retreat in New Brunswick, Canada, in my backyard or close to it, in St. Andrews.

I think the Liberal record is shocking on so many levels. As a member of this committee, I'm kind of perplexed that we're even having this discussion. I mean, any member of this committee from any party has the right to move a motion, and I don't mean to be disrespectful to that part, because it is the right of a member. I'm just shocked that the Liberal Party's direction would go there, of all places, because its own record has been so abysmal. We've just seen it so often that I...

You know, Mr. Chair, I think it would be fair to say that taxpayers in general have a legitimate fatigue with this sort of discussion, and I don't think that they expect anything different from the governing party, the Liberal Party of Canada, so I think that maybe this motion today is some sort of attempt to change the channel on perhaps one of their very own worst attributes as a party.

Let's look at these figures again. Let's just think about them. Obviously, I respect Mr. Sorbara. He's definitely a good guy. I've met him a few times. However, here's a guy who has a \$2,330 charge in

New Brunswick, and some of the charges we're dealing with today are \$1,000 less than that. I find that very strange.

● (1850)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** There is a point of order. Give me just one second, Mr. Stewart.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I'm sorry. Perhaps it's more of a point of clarification. I'm just seeing who is on the speaking list so far, where I am on that list and how long we have the resources for, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll update that after Mr. Stewart is done.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said, I think there's a general fatigue, and I think sometimes that the governing members are fatigued themselves because they're dealing with so many monetary issues and so many scandalous issues that taxpayers are fatigued by. I think that maybe this is just some sort of lame attempt to save a little bit of face for once in the last nine years.

Also, I think that if the Prime Minister is going to spend \$90,000 in Jamaica, \$6,000 on hotel rooms in England, half a million dollars on a vacation in Montana and, I think, a few hundred thousand again in Tofino.... I know I'm missing significant events that would have cost significant and substantial amounts of public money. However, I think at the same time, Mr. Chair, I find that—

**An hon. member:** You could talk about the barn.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** You know, I could talk about the barn here. I actually forgot, Mr. Chair, and thankfully—

● (1855)

**The Chair:** Mr. Stewart, the barn is not quite relevant to the motion.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** I think it is.

**The Chair:** Order.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** I have a point of order, Chair.

There is a wide latitude for relevance.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, calm down.

Mr. Stewart, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I would still like an answer to my question, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Look, there is a motion before the committee. Mr. Stewart has the floor.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** To my colleague's point, I get it. No member of Parliament has expensed a few thousand dollars to go stay at the barn at the National Capital Commission's property. However, that's another \$8-million racket that Liberal members have had to answer for. It may seem small to some, but today we're talking about much bigger amounts of money, Mr. Chair. We're talking about a half-million-dollar trip to Montana, and maybe they went to Yellowstone. We forgot to look into that part.

There was a \$90,000 Jamaican vacation and a \$428,258 taxpayer-funded Liberal Party caucus retreat in New Brunswick in St. Andrews-by-the-Sea. It's a very beautiful place in Canada, but that's still a substantial amount of money.

Mr. Chair, when I read this motion, I'm just going to say... I have done little bit of rambling here. I'm a little bit tired today. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, if I've rambled a bit, but I'm just going to cut to the chase, and this is going to be really important: This is just simply a deflection.

What is it a deflection from? They don't want the RCMP here until after—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have a point of order, Chair. Is this just filibustering? We can actually go to the vote—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I have a point of order. Mrs. Shanahan wasn't acknowledged on her point of order—

**The Chair:** We have a long speaking list—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** If you have a point of order, you have to be acknowledged—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** —unless the Conservatives are looking to avoid accountability—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You can't just say “point of order” and start talking—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Are we all just going to talk over each other? Is that how it works, Mr. Genuis? We could do exactly the same thing, sir.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You don't have the floor—

**The Chair:** Order.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I have a legitimate point of order.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Desjarlais—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I have a point of order. What are you implying, Blake?

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** I have a legitimate point of order. The interpreters are real people here—

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** —and I don't think we should just be slamming down the....

**The Chair:** Thank you. That is true.

Mr. Stewart, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** See what I'm talking about?

If everybody just noticed, Mr. Chair, that was another deflection. This is very strange behaviour from a government that has a track record of spending public money like there's no tomorrow and putting it on the backs of the taxpayers.

I think right out of the gate, in the case of the member from the Liberal Party who spoke ahead of me, his own retreat in New Brunswick cost \$1,000 more than some of the ones we're talking about. This is the kind of strange behaviour that you see when there's a very fatigued government at play.

Mr. Chair, I think it's very strange behaviour. I guess either they're trying to change the channel or they really believe that somehow the members of other parties spent more than they did, which is totally impossible—or maybe they could change the channel and the public would then see that potentially—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I would just like to know why we have additional Conservative members who are not part of our permanent committee and are yet coming in here and disrupting the committee as things are progressing. I think we all have to listen to what our members are saying.

**Mr. John Nater:** On the same point of order, Chair—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I'm trying to understand what's happening here, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on the same point, Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Chair.

I would encourage Ms. Khalid to review the associate membership of this committee.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. John Nater:** She will realize, if she were to do that, that every member who is currently in this committee room right now is either a member or an associate member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As she's trying to imply that a member of this committee or an associate member shouldn't be at a public accounts committee, I'm quite concerned about her denying the opportunity for parliamentarians to play their role and attend meetings that they are entitled as parliamentarians to attend.

● (1900)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** On the same point, Chair—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** On that point of order, Chair—no, no. If I have the floor, I have the floor.

**The Chair:** Whoa. Ms. Khalid has a point of order on the same point.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you, Chair.



I appreciate Mr. Nater's jabs at me. However, what I asked was why there are additional members beyond our permanent members on this committee. Why are they disrupting the conversation that is happening in this committee?

I don't think Mr. Nater, much as he would love to defend his members here, really addressed my points. I think it is for you, Chair, to address why members who are not permanent members on this committee are being unruly right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have two answers to your point. My understanding is that members of the House of Commons are free to come to committee meetings and take a seat. In some circumstances they can participate if they're rotated in and out, or members can agree to hear from a member as we've done with the Green Party, for example.

On your second point, I would urge members from all sides to restrain their comments and allow the speaker who has the floor to be heard so that we can move on from one to the next. The interruptions, of course, do tend to both cause and allow members to go on longer than perhaps anticipated. The interpreters do not need to hear the excess noise as well.

I'll take this moment, actually, since I do have the floor, and if I've missed anyone, let me know. Next I have Mr. Desjarlais, Mrs. Shanahan, Mr. Nater, Ms. Yip, Ms. Ferreri, Ms. Khalid and Mr. Genuis. Did I miss anyone? That is where we're at.

Mr. Stewart, you have the floor.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Chair.

I wonder if Ms. Khalid's point of order was actually motivated by her own guilty conscience.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, you're on a—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** That was maybe an unnecessary preamble, but it was—

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, I'm going to ask you to strike the point of order you are referencing.

You're a schooled man. You know the rules better than anyone.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'll defer to you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** The point is that she doesn't—

**The Chair:** You said you deferred to me. Please turn the microphone off. I want to hear from Mr. Stewart, please.

Mr. Genuis, you are down on the list.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, a significant number of deflections have happened, but they're normal in committee.

I would like to go back to this regular motion here. Mrs. Shanahan neglected to admit that she spent \$5,000 in Whitehorse at the Liberal caucus retreat in 2023. Mr. Sorbara neglected to notice that he spent \$2,330.62 in New Brunswick in September 2022. That in itself is nearly \$8,000.

You know, Mr. Chair, if you take Montana and St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and add them together, the two of them were a million dollars. Do you guys realize that? Those two vacations were about a million Canadian dollars to Canadian taxpayers so that the Prime Minister could go hang out in Montana and the Liberal caucus could spend \$428,000 and change in New Brunswick for its caucus retreat.

**The Chair:** On that note, we are out of resources. That was in my riding, of course. I am conflicted on it, because I always like to ensure that New Brunswick Southwest...

Actually, before I adjourn, I have a very quick announcement, just so you are aware. Microsoft is presently working on the request sent to them by letter. Due to the number of communications involved, which are in the thousands, they are seeking more time to provide this information to the committee. The deadline was today. Earlier I allowed them to extend the deadline.

On that, this meeting is adjourned due to lack of resources.

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>