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Chair: The Honourable Judy A. Sgro



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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 95 of the Standing Committee on International Trade. Please note that this meeting has been extended until 6:00 p.m.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders; therefore, members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those online, please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For interpretation online, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor audio, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I ask all participants to be careful when handling the earpieces in order to prevent feedback, which can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. Please speak only into the microphone that your headset is plugged into.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function.

If any technical issues arise, please inform me immediately so we can suspend.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, the committee is continuing its study of free trade negotiations between Canada and Ecuador.

For our first panel, we have with us today, as an individual, Thomas Chiasson-LeBel, assistant professor, Université de l'Ontario français. Back to visit with us are the Canadian Pork Council, Stephen Heckbert, executive director, and René Roy, chair. We have the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, with Ron Lemaire, president; and from Pulse Canada we have Jeff English, vice-president, marketing and communications.

Welcome to all of you gentlemen.

We will start with opening remarks of up to five minutes, please. Then we'll go with a round of questions.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Chair, if I could—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: —before we begin the comments from our guests here, I just want to speak to my colleagues with regard to the five motions that I presented and had the clerk distribute on Friday evening, and if possible, before the presentations take place, because I could be here for a while, Madam Chair. I have a lot to talk about. I want to give our witnesses the chance to fully present their findings, and if this hearing today doesn't preclude or doesn't go forward in its entirety, I feel we've wasted it.

I'd like to have these motions deliberated upon first in full before we go to comments, and—

The Chair: Because there are five motions that you wish to speak to—

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: —I'm going to be doing it either right now or in the first round of questioning. I would prefer, if I could, with your indulgence and that of my fellow committee members, to do it before we begin our final day of testimony in hearings regarding Canada's—

The Chair: Just so we get this clear, Mr. Baldinelli, we have four witnesses here now. We have the ambassador at five o'clock. If your intent is to prevent the meeting from going forward and hearing these witnesses, this was a study that we agreed to do—

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: No, my intent is... I want to ensure that we deliberate and debate these motions. I don't want to preclude the fact that I may be cutting off these witnesses. I would prefer, if we go through this entire day just debating my motions, that we have these witnesses return, and then they can make their comments in full. I would hate for us to just hear from them and then begin the rounds of discussions on my motions. I would like to begin with that, to have that undertaken, and then we can begin in full.

The Chair: It seems like it's disrespectful to the witnesses. Your motions have been tabled. Could we not possibly deal with those motions on Thursday and not have witnesses on Thursday, so that we could deal with your issues on Thursday and go forward with the witnesses that we have now?

It just seems unfair to the system that we have witnesses here ready to go, and you don't have one motion; you have five motions.

• (1545)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Yes, and my hope is to consider all five, if needed, today. My hope is that after reviewing my first motion, I will get consensus among the colleagues here in adoption of that motion. If that's the case, then we can go straight to the comments from our witnesses. That's my hope, if I could....

If I can just begin, I'd like to discuss the first motion. If I can get some co-operation and agreement among the parties, then we can begin our hearing. I'm not going to be taking this to Thursday. I'm going to be undertaking this now.

The Chair: If it's going to take the entire afternoon, then I think it's unfair to the witnesses to have them here, and we should dismiss them.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It may not.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): We don't know.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: We don't know.

I'd like, first, to go forward with my motion and see what my committee colleagues suggest. Then we'll go to the vote on that motion. If not, then I'm going to be moving the second motion. I hope that with cooler heads and common sense, we'll be able to adopt the first motion that I put forward.

Again, Madam Chair, I have the floor, and I'm not going to cede this opportunity.

Before we begin our final day of testimony in hearings regarding Canada's intention to enter into negotiations—

The Chair: Which motion are you at? There are five here. Make sure we are all on the same page.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'm going to be talking about the motion that speaks to amending our supply chain study. I believe it's number five.

The Chair: They're not numbered, unfortunately.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'll read that into the record, then, Madam Chair, with our change. I'll do that.

The Chair: Go ahead and read it, and then I will go back to the committee to get what direction the committee wants to go with this.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Again, before we begin the final day of testimony in hearings regarding Canada's intention to enter into negotiations aimed at achieving a free trade agreement with Ecuador, I would like to bring forward my motions, which were sent to the committee on Friday, for our consideration.

Madam Chair, I will lead with the following motion, one that seeks to build on the current supply chain study, which we will return to following our examination of a possible free trade agreement between Canada and Ecuador, as well as the CARM study that we will be doing. In essence, this motion adds a part (c) to the current motion for our supply chain study, while keeping the remaining wording intact.

As such, the motion will read as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a comprehensive study to (a) identify programs, tools and measures that support the growth of Canadian businesses and their contributions to domestic and global supply chains, export abroad, and becoming integral players in various economic sectors; (b) diversify and increase the presence of Canadian businesses in global markets, focusing on areas of competitive advantage and regional diversity of goods and services; and (c)—

This is the part I'm adding, Madam Chair.

—consider the ramifications of the ArriveCAN application and its impact on Canadian businesses, travel and tourism, as well as Canada's reputation as a travel destination for international visitors; that the committee hold a minimum of six meetings on this study—

This was in the previous motion, but again, it's a minimum of six meetings, and that could be added to.

—divided by regions in Canada; and that the committee report its comprehensive findings and recommendations to the House.

Chair, I propose this motion given the recent development that has dominated the attention of this House with regard to the ArriveCAN application and its negative impacts on Canadians. These impacts, concerns and, in many instances, grievances have been long-standing and varied, incorporating supply chain difficulties faced by not only the business sector but also, for example, in my community, the tourism industry, which is considered an export business.

Colleagues, I first raised concerns with the implementation of the ArriveCAN application on December 7, 2021, in a question I posed to the then public safety minister in the House. I can read that into the record, and I will. However, for now, I'd like to see, if my colleagues have had a chance to examine the wording that I'm proposing, whether they had any comments on that and whether they would support it.

• (1550)

The Chair: I have Mr. Seeback, and then I have Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I just want to say that I think that Mr. Baldinelli's motion actually dovetails nicely on the study, because we are also going to be looking at CARM shortly.

ArriveCAN was a program that was supposed to cost \$80,000 and ended up costing \$60 million. We all know that there were incredible deficiencies in that program.

If you were to analogize that, actually, to something that more people can relate to, for example, if you were to look at hiring someone for \$8,000 to repair your roof and then they came and gave you the bill at the end of the day and said, here's your bill, actually, for \$6 million, no one would put up with that. Add on top of it that the roof leaks and you find out that 75% of the people who allegedly are part of the invoice actually did no work on the roof, and you probably wouldn't pay the invoice.

I think it's pertinent for us to look at this, especially in light of CARM, which we know is coming. CARM, we understand, might have cost \$400 million at this point. Maybe that was something that was supposed to cost \$40,000 and is now at \$400 million.

I think it's relevant to get to the bottom of what happened with the ArriveCAN app so that we don't have this happen with CARM. It would be incredibly detrimental to Canadian trade if it were to operate in any way, shape or form like the efficiency of the ArriveCAN app.

I think this is a reasonable motion that the committee can support today, and then we can get on to the important business that we have with respect to this study.

The Chair: Mr. Cannings is next, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): I would say that this is the one motion in the package I can see that actually has anything to do with international trade, but unfortunately we just did a study on the effects of ArriveCAN on international trade. We kept that to that topic, so I don't see any reason to go over that again.

I would agree with the Conservatives that this is a very serious-sounding scandal, but it's already being studied in public accounts and government operations. I know because I've sat in on the OG-GO committee's deliberations on this. I don't think there is any reason at all for the international trade committee to basically waste time when work is being diligently done in other committees to get to the bottom of this.

I think we should just go to a vote and then move on and finish this study, because we've already studied ArriveCAN and its effects on trade, and it's not our business to study the gory details behind this scandal. That's being done in public accounts and government operations.

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): I want to apologize to the witnesses here today.

Let's just go to a vote so we can hear from our witnesses.

The Chair: We'll call the vote on the motion.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I had my hand up.

I'd like to discuss this, if I could, and respond to my NDP colleague.

It is relevant to our committee, particularly for my riding, which depends on tourism. Tourism is an export industry.

In terms of the supply chain study that we're looking at, if we could examine, for instance, commercial traffic, about 76% of the commercial vehicles that cross our border cross at land border crossings. Four of the main bridges into the United States are located in Ontario, and two of the busiest are in my riding alone.

For example, when we look at supply chain issues, we were talking during the ArriveCAN implementation, and we were looking at bridge delays of over two hours for commercial vehicles. Business was interrupted. My hope is that we can look at this so that we can

come forward with recommendations, examine the previous recommendations that we made and ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Tourism is an export industry. In 2019, for example, tourism was a \$105-billion sector for the Canadian economy. Because of COVID, it shrank to \$80 billion, Madam Chair.

In my community alone, \$2.5 billion in tax receipts are generated because of the tourism sector. It employs 40,000 people alone. COVID and this government's reaction to it, through its fatally flawed ArriveCAN, put all of that at risk.

In fact, Madam Chair, if you look at the two years 2021 and 2022, we can say that tourism suffered because of COVID. The government's response in 2022 was horrific. They continued to stick to a fatally flawed ArriveCAN application when it wasn't required, and we lost a third tourism year.

The devastating results of that third tourism year were self-inflicted, and they were self-inflicted because of the actions of this government, which denied businesses—again, we're talking about an export industry—the right to operate, compete and generate the revenues they need to compete and succeed. We're starting to see tourism recovery happen only now, Madam Chair. That's beginning only now.

Again, in communities such as mine, American visitation is at 80%. Domestic visits, because my location is a rubber tire market, are quite strong, but the tourism recovery in this country is uneven.

We saw this past summer, in places like British Columbia and Quebec, that the tourism economy was hampered because of forest fires. It wasn't in communities such as mine, and we were lucky because of that, but it is an important aspect for us to consider and for us to study. I think including this as part of our supply chain study dovetails nicely.

As my colleague Mr. Seeback said, it not only dovetails nicely into our supply chain study, but it also speaks to and references issues with regard to CARM.

In the recent Auditor General's report, which was devastating, on the impact of this ArriveCAN app, the last recommendation was:

Prior to releasing an application or an update, the Canada Border Services Agency should carry out and document its testing, as well as document results obtained and any outstanding issues, on the basis of the defined roles and responsibilities. The agency should also obtain release approval.

Here's the response from the Canada Border Services Agency. We'll be following up when we do this CARM study, but I think it's important. Their response was that they agreed to this recommendation:

The Vice-President, Information, Science and Technology Branch, recognizes that, given the constantly evolving pandemic environment and the requirement for 177 releases in 36 months, testing documentation was insufficient during ArriveCAN development. It was not feasible to complete all testing documentation as per existing procedures in this emergency environment.

A procedure for streamlined testing documentation will be developed and implemented that will increase agility in emergency situations while at the same time ensuring sufficient controls are in place to document testing results prior to release to production.

● (1555)

In addition, the Information, Science and Technology Branch will review and update existing testing procedures to ensure control steps are introduced and documentation is complete before any system or application is released to production.

These actions will be completed by June 2024.

Madam Chair, one aspect for serious consideration is that this CARM program is going to be implemented in May 2024, so it will be incumbent upon us in the next conversations that we have to ask government officials about their testing procedures. We're hearing significant stakeholder response saying that they're not ready to move forward with CARM.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Where's the relevance?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'm getting to the supply chain.

Because of that, if they're not ready, what's going to happen at our border crossings? We're going to be seeing a supply chain issue that is unanticipated.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

We want to be respectful to our witnesses. The member opposite said that we'd go to a vote. We want to go to a vote. Let's get to a vote, so that we can move on and hear from our witnesses here today.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: That's not a point of order.

He has the floor.

● (1600)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I have the floor and can continue, and I will continue, Madam Chair, for as long as I can.

Again, this application had enormous impacts on my community. That's why I'm here.

Madam Chair, I first raised it on December 7, 2021, in a question I posed to the public safety minister in the House.

Let me read this into the record:

Mr. Speaker, as an MP with four border crossings in my riding, I can tell members that the ArriveCAN app has been a real mess. Take the example of Bernadette in my riding. She was forced into a 14-day quarantine when she is double vaccinated and had a booster. She is now receiving threatening phone

calls harassing her to complete her testing requirements or face jail time and/or a \$650,000 fine. She is 75 years old.

Madam Chair, 177 changes were required because of this application, and 10,000 people were forced into quarantine—and that was in June 2022. That doesn't even take into account what happened to poor Bernadette in my riding.

The issues were there, and this government was asleep at the switch. It didn't respond to the issues, going back to 2021, when we had issues. This, if I can remind everybody, was before all the issues were found with regard to contracting practices.

However, in the time available, I'm going to be getting to that.

When will the Liberal government fix the mess it created at the borders and rescind this unnecessary quarantine order against my constituent?

That was the last question I asked the government. That goes back to 2021. The sad reality is, Madam Chair, that the government took no steps to address the concerns that were being expressed on quarantine orders, border delays or the continuing escalating costs for an app that many were questioning the development of in the first place.

Sadly, this government could have taken action and taken action much sooner. On May 19, 2022, my colleague, the member for Thornhill, tabled an opposition motion in the House for debate.

The Chair: Excuse me. Can I interrupt for just one second?

My sense is that if you're going to want to have a vote on all five motions, it would be beneficial if we asked the witnesses if they would come back to the next meeting, so that you can continue on with your five motions and we don't have to hold the witnesses up. We also have the ambassador at 5:00 p.m. We might as well let the witnesses come back on Thursday, so that you can have your time to continue on with your motions.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: We're going to be doing the motions, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Well, if you're going to do the motions....

It's complete disrespect for the witnesses.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I apologize, but please—

The Chair: We should let the witnesses—

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: —don't impugn my motives.

The Chair: I am not saying anything. If we're going to spend this meeting doing these motions, as you chose—you tabled them—what I am suggesting is that we dismiss the witnesses and not have them sit and go through this. They can come back on Thursday, if their schedules allow. We would also have to advise the ambassador of the same thing.

Yes, Mr. Arya.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): I would like to apologize to the witnesses.

You came during your working hours, footing your time, money and energy to help Parliament go through the process of developing legislation and agreements that are important to individual Canadians, Canadian businesses and Canadian trade. At the end of the day, our prosperity is dependent on what you and your members do on the ground there and on what we do on your behalf.

You have taken your time. I sincerely apologize for this. This has been an unproductive day for you. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: Is there agreement in the committee that we ask the witnesses to come back on Thursday?

Clearly, we are going to be spending time here. Is everyone in agreement with that?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Chair, if this is going to come back again on Thursday, I think we'll be doing very much harm to the witnesses to have them give up their work and come here, sit and make them go through the same thing again. It's very unproductive. I think it's also disrespectful to ask them to come back again to have to go through the same process.

The Chair: I had a list before I interrupted Mr. Baldinelli, in fairness here.

I have Mr. Savard-Tremblay, Mr. Sidhu and Mr. Miao.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Actually, my comments are more along the same lines as Mr. Cannings'.

I totally understand Mr. Baldinelli's considerations and the consequences that may have occurred in terms of tourism. However, when we discussed this—it seems to me that the study took place last May or June—I pointed out that it was rather difficult to establish a link between our committee and the tourism industry. So we agreed to change the wording to make it clearer that we needed to talk more about trade. Finally, all the witnesses came to talk about tourism.

That said, the study has been done. The app has undeniably had an impact, a deleterious and problematic effect on the tourism industry. In addition, many Canadians find it extremely irritating. However, the issue now lies elsewhere.

We know the consequences the app has had. The study has been done. Then it became optional. The obligation to use it has been removed. I think this committee's work had a lot to do with that. Let's be proud of that.

Now, this is no longer a scandal for the industry. It's an ethical scandal, a financial scandal, a scandal about the awarding of contracts and their subsequent management.

I don't really think we should do a study again with the same witnesses, who are going to come and tell us exactly the same thing. The problem now lies elsewhere.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Look, I know we want to get to our next study. I believe it's CARM. We heard about how important CARM is to the member opposite. Delaying CARM by another couple of days is not going to be beneficial to industry experts. I believe we have those witnesses lined up as well.

This is not only impacting our witnesses here today; it's going to impact our witnesses for the next two or three days.

Therefore, I believe we need to go to a vote and get through this so we can hear from our witnesses today. I think we need to be mindful of their time today, as well.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: I have you down next. I'm sorry. I had a list.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Baldinelli had the floor, and then you interrupted him to ask if we should dismiss. Now we're in some weird speaking chamber. We're either letting the witnesses go or not, and then we're back to Mr. Baldinelli. It's not a new round of talking.

The Chair: If they have something to comment on as to whether or not the witnesses should go, not go or whatever, then I need to give them a minute to have the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Miao.

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, I know that in past committees we discussed the importance of this study, especially the free trade agreement with Ecuador. That's why all our witnesses are here today. We shouldn't take up too much of their time, because it's important work. The NDP put forward this motion.

Of course, the member opposite mentioned the CARM study and also incorporating the additional point to my motion. Let's not take this time up for them. Let's just move on and call a vote or whatever it is. Let's do the important work.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Seeback, go ahead before I go back to Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: No. I was on the list to speak after Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Baldinelli still has to speak to this motion.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague for allowing me to continue.

Are we now, Madam Chair, going to discharge our witnesses?

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*] the committee to do that, so you continue on until we can have a vote on these items. Let's vote on it.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Well, Madam Chair, I still have the floor.

The Chair: Well then, continue.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Again, the issue with regard to ArriveCAN, its deficiencies, its impact and its devastating economic impacts, not only on our commercial trade corridors but also on our tourism economy, goes back to as early 2021. Again, I first raised that issue on December 7, 2021, with regard to the issues impacting my one constituent.

Sadly, the government could have taken action, and much sooner, to rectify the problems. We could have avoided everything and those devastating comments in the Auditor General's report that we're seeing today. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

On May 19, 2022, Madam Chair, my colleague, the member for Thornhill, tabled an opposition motion for debate in the House of Commons. Given the importance of the tourism industry in my community, I naturally devoted time to this topic and delivered the following remarks. I said:

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

It is an honour for me to rise in my place today to speak about a pressing issue facing Canadians and international travellers entering and exiting through Canada's various ports of entry, including airports, land border crossings, bridge border crossings and even CBSA marine reporting sites for small vessels.

My hon. colleague from Thornhill has brought forward an excellent and timely motion today, one which I will be fully supporting. Ultimately, it calls on the government "to immediately revert to pre-pandemic rules and service levels for travel." In short, the Liberal government's outdated COVID-19 protocols at airports and other international ports of entry are causing extreme delays, lineups, bottlenecks and missed connections.

Again, we're talking about supply chain issues. I continued:

Worst of all, they are acting as a disincentive for those wishing to travel to Canada.

While the focus of our opposition motion today is on airports, it is very important and relevant that other international ports of entry are mentioned and included as well, because they are all connected in our economic ecosystem. These ports of entry support businesses and economic opportunities in many sectors, including tourism, which is very important in my riding, as we have the city of Niagara Falls and the towns of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

My Niagara Falls riding has four international bridge crossings. They are managed by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, respectively. These are the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, the Rainbow Bridge and the Peace Bridge. All have been hit hard by the two-year pandemic, and the federal government has done nothing to support these bridges, despite the heavy hardship of lost traffic due to extended border closures.

It was supply chain issues. I went on:

One of the biggest issues I hear about at our international bridge crossings is that of backlogs and delays being caused by the ArriveCAN app. In an email from March 24, 2022, the general manager of the Buffalo and Fort Erie [Peace] Bridge Authority warned local politicians that their analysis showed the continued mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app would result in much longer processing times and lengthy border waits, which would significantly depress cross-border traffic at a time when we were moving into the 2022 summer tourism summer season.

Fast forward two months, and here we are. His prediction was right. I raised this issue with the federal government as soon as I could. What did it do to prepare for these border backlogs? It doubled down and decided to spend \$25 million more in budget 2022 to continue to support the mandatory use of this application.

Again, Madam Chair, the government, in 2022, doubled down and spent another \$25 million on an app it knew didn't work as ear-

ly as 2021. In fact, because of the Auditor General's report, we know—and the government has yet to provide additional documentation—it could be up to \$60 million, and perhaps even more. That's why we're here today. That's why we're trying to get this added to our supply chain study.

I'll continue with what I said then:

Along my border community riding, there are also a number of CBSA marine reporting sites for small vessels. They include the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club, the Smugglers Cove Boat Club, the Greater Niagara Boating Club, Miller's Creek Marina, Bertie Boating Club, and the Buffalo Canoe Club, amongst others. Out of all these sites I just listed, only one is operational. Miller's Creek in the upper Niagara River and Fort Erie is open, but all the other sites are closed.

Members can imagine, if someone is boating on the lower Niagara River in Niagara-on-the-Lake, they would have to travel all the way to Port Weller in St. Catharines to report in with CBSA. If they are on the upper Niagara River but closer to Chippawa and Niagara Falls, then they have to travel all the way to Fort Erie and all the way back just to report in with CBSA. This adds many kilometres to a voyage and is a huge waste of time and money for boaters, especially as fuel prices skyrocket to record highs.

● (1610)

These closures are a huge issue for local recreational boaters, especially as we approach the May long weekend and enter the summer boating season. We need the government to reopen all sites immediately. There is no time to waste.

However, the government refused to act.

Tourist businesses in my riding were hit first. They were hit the hardest, and they will take the longest to recover from COVID-19. The effect these failing Liberal policies are having on our boaters will only make recovery take that much longer. Tourist businesses in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie depend on domestic and international visitors travelling to our communities, spending their time and dollars and enjoying all that Niagara has to offer. The operation of attractions, historic sites, restaurants, wineries, craft breweries, cideries, casinos and many other businesses depend on this visitation.

Think about this again—\$105 billion, the tourism economy in 2019. Of that, Niagara alone generated \$2.5 billion in receipts. In budget 2021, this federal government provided an economic package of \$100 billion for a sector that generated...excuse me, I think it was \$101 million, when in fact Niagara generates \$2.5 billion alone.

In communities such as Niagara, international visitation is important. While they make up approximately 25% of our total visitor base, these international visitors account for over 50% of the dollars spent in our tourism communities. This spend helps support over 40,000 jobs that are reliant on a strong tourism industry, which we had in Niagara before this pandemic. That is why it is essential we welcome back our international friends, guests and visitors. That starts by giving them a great, quick and efficient experience at our international ports of entry.

No one is going to choose Canada as a travel vacation destination if they have to risk waiting hours upon hours in stressful and frustrating lineups at an airport or a border crossing. Economic damage and missed opportunities are already being incurred. As the world reopens from COVID and other countries lift their restrictions, Canada looks to be stuck in the past and out of touch with reality. For example, the European Union and the United States have dropped their mask mandates for passengers on flights and in airports.

As countries around the world are reducing red tape and making it easier for citizens to travel again, the Liberals in Ottawa continue to impose their outdated and unjustified mandates, which are leading to longer lines and a slower recovery. As an example, fully vaccinated travellers arriving in Canada are still subjected to random COVID-19 testing, and in some cases, these travellers are not even told they have been selected until they get a surprise automated phone call or email a few days later from Switch Health.

This happened to Kathryn and her daughter, two constituents of mine. On May 10, they had an uneventful Nexus border crossing at the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia. They were never informed that they were selected for random testing, nor were they given a random test on their exit from their Nexus inspection. Three days later, they received multiple phone calls and emails from Switch Health warning them to get a day-one random test or else risk contravening a public health order with severe penalties, including fines upwards of tens of thousands of dollars and mandatory quarantine. It seems illogical for people to be told they have to take a random test and then wait for Switch Health to send it to them by courier so they can complete it a few days, if not weeks, later. How is this in the best public health interest of Canadians? Simply put, the incompetence of the government knows no bounds.

Again, the Auditor General's report details that 177 changes were made to this app, Madam Chair.

Many experts have called for the end of these ridiculous requirements. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has called for a step back to improve regulations in order for Canada to become more competitive. The president of the Canadian Airports Council has called for the removal of legacy public health protocols, noting that mandatory testing is leading to bottlenecks and hurting Canada's competitiveness.

Again, that's a supply chain issue.

These requirements are stifling our hard-hit tourism industry and are leading to long delays for Canadians just looking to travel after a long two years of obeying government-induced lockdown measures.

- (1615)

All of these terrible travel experiences at our airports and border crossings are hurting Canada's economy, competitiveness and international global reputation as a top tourist destination. Since the world started reopening months ago, Canada has lagged far behind our international tourism destination competitors due to these bad federal government policies. On a scale this large, every port of entry across our country is negatively impacted, and this ripple effect negatively impacts every riding of the House of Commons, especially those, like Niagara Falls, that depend on tourism as a major economic driver. We all benefit from a strong tourism industry, and we all lose when it is weak and chaotic, like it is now.

After two long years of government shutdowns, lockdowns, border closures and stringent travel restrictions, many tourist businesses in my riding are counting on a significant rebound this summer. Unfortunately, due to these travel measures and issues at airports and borders, government policy is working to stifle, rather than support, an urgently needed recovery in our tourism economy in 2022. Through their lack of preparedness to keep Canadians safe and preserve our economic best interests, the Liberals and NDP are abdicating their responsibility to govern.

In my opinion, before COVID, Canada was the best place to visit and vacation. We can get back to being the best, and we should strive for nothing less, but we have a lot of work ahead of us, and it starts with objective of this motion, which is to get the federal government to immediately revert to prepandemic rules and service levels for travel. Niagara badly needs to achieve economic recovery this summer, and that is simply not going to happen if ArriveCAN and other federal travel and health restrictions continue at our airports and borders. It seems as though everyone wants to achieve economic recovery from this pandemic and a return to normalcy, everyone except the Liberal-NDP government, but it should know there is still time to save the 2022 tourism season if it acts quickly, and it should start by supporting today's common sense and timely motion.

Sadly, Madam Chair, the opposition parties voted against this motion. That includes the two Liberal members from Niagara.

That did not stop those on the Conservative side from again asking tough questions. In fact, on June 2, 2022, I asked the government the following question:

Mr. Speaker, budget 2022 allocates \$25 million to the continued mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app, yet it failed to extend important tourism recovery programs for businesses that still needed the help. The government has been warned that the ArriveCAN app is impacting travel to Canada.

What is more important to the Liberal-NDP government: funding ArriveCAN, which clogs up our borders and deters visits, or scrap[ping] this app to help achieve tourism recovery in Niagara and throughout Canada?

Unfortunately, the government continued its approach of being one of obstinance.

A special transport committee hearing was later held on August 19, 2022. I had the opportunity to pose the following questions to the transport minister at the time:

Minister, a Canadian traveller recently left this public comment on Tripadvisor: "Just got back from a trip to Nevada flying out of Buffalo, and I am from Ontario, the airport is a dream, no line ups, quick through TSA check points, the airport is super clean.... Quick drive over to the airport. No Covid testing required! Crossing across the U.S. border is easy, they only ask if you are vaccinated and do not ask to see your test (I have crossed three times in the past two months, same thing every time) coming back across the border at the Rainbow [bridge] there were about 10 cars in front of us and it took for ever to get to the booth. So anyone thinking of ditching Pearson Airport and travelling down to Buffalo, do it—its worth it".

Minister, Niagara Falls is the number one tourism, leisure destination in all of Canada, yet every taxpayer dollar that Destination Canada spends in international markets, including our prime market, the United States, for our border communities is being wasted by headlines that continually hit the press talking about Pearson Airport being the worst airport in the world.

- (1620)

My colleague just mentioned this. Sixty countries around the world have abandoned all air travel pandemic restrictions, including most of our European allies. Why does [this] government continue to cling to these restrictions, which only do a disservice and disincentivize travel to this country?

I later remarked:

There are [over] 40,000 people in my community who work in the tourism sector, and they're being impacted. We've lost two tourism years because of COVID. This year, if we lose it, it's self-inflicted, and there's nobody to blame but the Liberal government. When are you going to take action?

That was followed by another question to the then minister, where I asked:

Who told you, Minister, that ArriveCAN is not having any impact on wait times?

So upset was I by the response that I simply stated to the then transport minister:

Minister, they're going to hold a parade in Buffalo for you. Their chamber of commerce is going to hold a parade for you.

Finally, when the government acted, I provided a statement in the House on October 24, 2022.

Again, Madam Chair, we're talking about this being raised in May, prior to the tourism season beginning, and the government failed to take action. It failed to act until the tourism season was over. You have to remember that 75% of that tourism income is generated in an eight-month period, and what the government did was preclude those businesses from the opportunity that they themselves wanted. They didn't want government assistance. They didn't want government programs. They wanted to be open, to do what they do best, which is to welcome visitors from throughout the world.

Again, we're an export industry. For tourism, \$105 billion dropped down to \$80 billion. Their goal now is to get back up to \$130 billion as a sector. What is it that we can do? Stop putting impediments in their own way of growth.

Again, I had to stop to comment. We're going back to 2022. Finally, when the government made its announcement that it was ending restrictions, I said this in the House on October 24:

Less than one month after the election, the federal Liberals threw in the towel and gave up on defending the disastrous ArriveCAN app. For many months, medical experts have told MPs that ArriveCAN could have been [scrapped] as early as this past spring. Instead, the Liberals held on and continued its mandatory use through summer of 2022, crushing any chance for an economic recovery for our hardest-hit tourism sector. Not only did this useless app cost Canadians tens of millions of wasted taxpayer dollars, it also cost our economy untold billions of dollars in lost tourism revenue.

Before the pandemic, the Canadian tourism industry was valued at \$105 billion. Today, it is down to \$80 billion largely because of failed Liberal pandemic policies, like the mandatory use of ArriveCAN.

• (1625)

The Chair: Mr. Baldinelli, excuse me for one second.

We have a point of order.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to raise this point of order, because I arrived slightly late. I fully understood that we were going to hear from these witnesses. There are some Ecuadorean witnesses coming. We have the ambassador coming. I understand that Mr. Baldinelli is trying to move his motion, but we've been listening here for quite some time, and I think we all understand what the motion is.

We have it before us, so I'm saying, on a point of order, that the relevancy needs to be concise to moving the motion, so we can vote on it and on whether or not we study this. That is when this information would be placed, but right now, we and the public have been informed that we would be studying Mr. Cannings' motion on Ecuador.

Thank you. I look for your ruling.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Would you please keep to the points in the motion itself, Mr. Baldinelli, as much as possible? The tourism sector in 2022 is very different from the tourism sector in 2023 as far as numbers go, so I don't want to mislead people.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'm going back and indicating that this government could have taken action, Madam Chair. Instead, it put in place an app that I believe was in effect for over 885 days, which had devastating—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I have the floor.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It had devastating consequences on our tourism economy, which, you must remember, is an export industry. Not only did it have devastating impacts on our tourism economy, but it had devastating impacts on the supply chains. Again, I have two of the four busiest land border crossings in all of Canada, and they came to a standstill because of the impacts of ArriveCAN. That needs to be studied.

That's why I've put forward this motion to add our examination of the impacts of ArriveCAN on the supply chain. I think it's a very fair motion that I've put forward. I believe we've even held three of the six meetings. We asked for a minimum of six meetings for the supply chain. I'm asking that this committee examine, as part of that study, the issues with regard to ArriveCAN and its impact on supply chains.

Madam Chair, it is entirely relevant for me to be here. It is entirely relevant for me to put forward this motion. I will never apologize for defending the interests of the hard-working people in my riding who were devastated. The number of businesses that were lost.... Small businesses and mom-and-pop shops had to close because of the actions of this government. They knew they could have taken actions to end the implementation of ArriveCAN earlier. Their obstinacy caused the loss of businesses and hurt the economy. We are only now beginning the process of recovery. In fact, my community is quite fortunate in that it is a rubber tire market, in that sense. It is recovering. That recovery is uneven across the country.

In fact, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada is having its International Indigenous Tourism Conference right now. The government should know. In the budget of 2022, its only announcement with regard to tourism funding was \$20 million to our indigenous tourism partners. Why did it take over 500 days for the government to fund at least \$10 million to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada?

How do you treat your partners like that, Madam Chair? You don't treat your partners like that.

• (1630)

Mr. Terry Sheehan: I have a point of order.

If we're going to get into the facts, the Conservatives voted against indigenous tourism funding in the December 2023 marathon.

Mr. Kyle Seebach: This is not a point of order.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: They voted against the tourism assistance fund.

The Chair: Let him finish his point.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: They voted against the Canada economic development tourism growth program for the Prairies. They voted against the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario tourism growth program.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Terry, your government has cut from—

The Chair: Let him finish his point. Then we're back to you.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: This is a fact. All of the funding for this year that was supporting tourism, since it's finally growing again, was voted against by the Conservative party. We're getting into debate. I'm making a point. We should vote on this and discuss it further.

They also voted against FedDev. That's the tourism funding for southern Ontario. They voted against FedNor funding for northern Ontario.

I worked in the tourism industry, and I was speaking to them last week. It's growing again, but they need the funding that was voted against by the Conservative party, so we're getting into debate—

The Chair: Is the committee ready to vote on this motion?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: No, Madam Chair. I have not ceded the floor.

The Chair: Okay, then. It's back to you. Have a good time.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: To my colleague's point, let's look at the government funding.

In 2021, the government provided \$500 million in funding over two years for the tourism sector. What is it providing now? It's \$108 million over three years. It provided \$50 million to Destination Canada.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: In 2021, you voted against \$500 million for the tourism relief fund and \$108 million for the tourism growth fund for 2023.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Can I finish?

You cut funding from tourism.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: You called me out.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: You provided \$50 million over three years to Destination Canada.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: You voted consistently against tourism funding.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Destination Canada's budget has gone from a high of \$157 million down to \$111 million.

Mr. Terry Sheehan: You've consistently voted against tourism funding. You can't have it both ways.

The Chair: Let's try to be accurate.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It's Liberal math, Madam Chair.

The Chair: No, it's not Liberal math. We have the books to—

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Again, it's the treatment of the tourism community, which suffers because of this Liberal math.

The Chair: Let's not have disinformation. Let's try to be accurate.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It is accurate, Madam Chair. Those figures are—

The Chair: In your mind, maybe....

Mr. Kyle Seeback: This feels like a filibuster. We should get to the point and vote on it.

The Chair: You're going to do it the whole afternoon. Keep going now. We'll vote now, or we'll vote later. Keep on going.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: We'll vote sooner without ridiculous interruptions.

The Chair: Well, the misinformation is the point Mr. Sheehan is raising.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I don't think the chair should be using the term "misinformation". It's completely inappropriate.

The Chair: Well, that is what's being said.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I'll put my figures up against that gentleman's any time.

When I vote against their budget allocations, I'm voting for my constituents, to remove this government from office because of their ineptitude. They have destroyed the Canadian economy. They have—

The Chair: Now you're completely off topic. You're not talking about the motion whatsoever. Get back on focus here, Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I will do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, before the pandemic, the Canadian tourism industry was valued at \$105 billion. Today it is down to \$80 billion, largely because of failed Liberal pandemic policies like the mandatory use of ArriveCAN.

At a time when many economists are predicting rough waters ahead for the Canadian economy, the Liberals continue to waste precious taxpayer money on this useless app. Like a bad dream that never ends, despite the end of the mandatory use of ArriveCAN, a new issue—the more scandalous issue that continues to dominate our time and attention today—is the spending that has been involved with regard to ArriveCAN.

We must learn and ensure it never happens again.

In comments I made to the House last fall, on November 1, 2023, I indicated:

A lot happened during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, which stretched over three years, from 2020 to 2022. It was a time when the Liberal government tried to give itself full spending authority without any opposition scrutiny. This was in the spring of 2020. Then, the Liberal government thought it was a good idea to prorogue Parliament in the middle of a raging global pandemic later that summer. After more than a year of social distancing, public health restrictions, masking and vaccines, the hypocritical Liberal government plunged the country [then] into a pandemic election.

It is truly unthinkable, if one goes back to look at it. However, for the Liberals, it has never been about good and sound policy. It always was and always has been about politics. That is why we are here this evening, unfortunately, to discuss another disastrous Liberal policy objective, which did little to protect Canadians during the pandemic and almost single-handedly ruined any chance of a tourism recovery in 2022.

I went on to say:

We have since covered a wide range of topics and issues impacting Canadian trade.

I was appointed to the Standing Committee on International Trade in February 2022.

While some people might not realize this, tourism has important elements of trade, as an export industry. When COVID-19 hit our country, tourism was hit first and hardest. We all knew early on that it would take the longest to recover.

When we fast-forward more than three years, since the federal government agreed to close our international borders, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt in many parts of Canada's tourism economy. Recovery is not equal. Some areas are recovering more quickly than others, particularly those in rural, remote and northern communities.

Further, thousands of tourism operators across the country continue to struggle with high levels of debt after taking out pandemic loans, through no fault of their own, and with a tourism visitation base that simply has not returned to be as strong as it was before COVID.

Domestically, Canadians are now scaling back their spending and travel plans, impacted by stubborn inflation, increasing carbon taxes and higher interest rates, which make everything more expensive and life more unaffordable. Internationally, visitors are simply not coming as they did before COVID.

After eight years under the Liberal Prime Minister, Canada's tourism reputation has been damaged, and our country's overall tourism economy has lost its competitive edge to other countries. For reasons, many related to the Liberal mismanagement of our tourism economy, visitors are simply not making Canada their destination of choice as they once did.

The reputational impacts on Canada's tourism industry that were caused by the mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app should not be downplayed or ignored. When this dysfunctional \$54-million app—

That was at the time; this was last year.

—was made mandatory for anyone entering Canada, the issues faced by travellers were countless. Moreover, the issues were being faced by just about every person trying to arrive here, at every point of entry, ranging from major airports to land borders and international bridge crossings.

My riding of Niagara Falls—

I repeat this because it's huge for my community.

—is the number one leisure tourism destination in Canada, employing over 40,000 tourism workers. Before the pandemic, it was generating over \$2.1 billion in tourism receipts. My riding includes [again] the city of Niagara Falls, the town of Fort Erie and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. As a border riding, we also have four international bridge crossings, with at least one bridge in each municipality.

● (1635)

From day one, simply put, the ArriveCAN app was an utter failure. Its impacts were so severe that I felt compelled to bring forward a motion to study this issue at committee. Upon agreement, we undertook this study, which eventually produced the sixth report, along with the motion and the amendment that we are debating here today. While I sincerely appreciate our committee's work on producing this report, the fact is that new and very troubling information about ArriveCAN has surfaced, beyond its astronomical price tag, which now stands at approximately \$54 million. These issues should be of great concern to all parliamentarians, partisan politics aside—

I think this is important, Madam Chair. I raised concerns about the scandal of spending habits going back to November 1, 2023, and at that time it was \$54 million, and I say this again:

These issues should be of great concern to all parliamentarians...no matter one's political stripe. New allegations of misconduct, including identity theft, forged resumés, contractual theft, fraudulent billing, price-fixing and collusion involving contractors, ghost contractors and senior bureaucrats have emerged. Canadian taxpayers deserve answers.

I look forward to hearing from my colleague, the member for Calgary Midnapore, as she expands on some of these shocking revelations.

There is a reason we now call the app and its implications "arrive scam". Given that new information about ArriveCAN that we simply cannot ignore has come to light, it is only reasonable to support this amendment to the motion to extend the ArriveCAN study to get to the bottom of these issues. As badly as the Liberal-NDP coalition wants to move on and forget about its mistakes, bad decision-making and reckless spending, there is still a lot of unfinished business to take care of from the pandemic years, and the ArriveCAN app absolutely must be included in this.

Madam Chair, I said this on November 1, 2023. Those comments are relevant today. That is why I have put forward this motion that we include study of the ArriveCAN app as part of our supply chain study.

I'll finish off those comments that I made a year ago, almost.

I see a trend growing here, whether it is the refusal to review \$15.5 billion in potentially ineligible pandemic wage benefit payments because it is not worth the effort, wasting more than \$600 million on a risky pandemic election or not caring that \$54 million was required to develop the dysfunctional ArriveCAN app. The reckless and wasteful NDP-Liberal coalition has become far too complacent with the tax dollars of hard-working Canadians. It must realize it has a spending addiction that is costing Canadians and the country dearly. It is our job as the opposition to hold the government to account. That is why I support my colleague's amendment to the motion, to amend the sixth report to include reference to the \$54 million of hard-earned Canadian tax dollars wasted on the application, the inaccurate evidence government officials provided during the committee's investigation, the serious allegations of fraudulent contract practices and the statement made by the RCMP that it is investigating criminality in the contracts that were awarded. Now the Auditor General of Canada wants to update Canadians on where all the money went.

Again, these statements were made on November 1, 2023, yet here we are again. The opposition members, in the NDP and Bloc, as well as the Liberals, voted against that.

Canadians deserve answers. People of Niagara deserves answers. This government's obstinance in removing the application until the fall of 2022 denied tourism recovery to those in my community and throughout Canada who are looking for it so badly. To add insult to injury, it is a government that feigned interest in responding to the concerns of our tourism community and simply did not care to ensure that hard-working Canadian taxpayers' dollars would be protected. Instead, we are now continually bombarded by scandalous revelations on how an application that could have been developed over a weekend wound up costing Canadians \$54 million.

After eight years in office, the tired and inept government and Prime Minister are not worth the cost. Let us get Canadians the answers they deserve. It is simply the common-sense thing to do.

• (1640)

The shocking results of the Auditor General's report must be followed up on to ensure that it never happens again. How is this relevant to us, the members of the international trade committee? For one, we will immediately begin work on another study, another CB-SA digitization project, CARM, which will have major impacts and ramifications for our import, export and brokerage sectors, impacting our supply chains.

Let me just read this. I believe it is the last recommendation, again, from the Auditor General's report. It deals with testing. I believe I've already read it into the record, but I think it's important to do so now, because it is important for our next study. It impacts the supply chain issues we will be facing. We've heard great concerns from stakeholders. They will be coming forward in the next several weeks and days to express their concerns, but we could have some enormous bottlenecks at our border crossings that one has never envisioned.

Again, the last recommendation deals with testing. This is the recommendation from the Auditor General:

Prior to releasing an application or an update, the Canada Border Services Agency—

• (1645)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Baldinelli. I have to interrupt.

Mr. Cannings, do you have a point?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Yes. We're approaching five o'clock. I'm just wondering about the ambassador and whether we should abandon—

The Chair: When five o'clock comes, I will be in a position to dismiss and thank the witnesses for being here. The committee wants to hear the ambassador, but if this continues, there's no sense in keeping the ambassador and tying up his time.

Mr. Richard Cannings: I would just like to know if we are envisioning hearing from the ambassador today, and if not, when?

The Chair: If not, I think it should be the very next available meeting, which would be Thursday's meeting that we possibly have—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*] available?

The Chair: I don't know. I have to ask that question.

Yes, Mr. Arya.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Chair, on the point that Mr. Cannings made, we cannot assume that the witnesses will be available on Thursday. Even if they are available, I'm not sure whether we should put them through the same unproductive thing that they faced today. They're all working hard on behalf of their members and their businesses and for the Canadian economy. We can pass legislation only with the voluntary support of Canadians like them who take time, money and effort to guide us, to give their input and to give their suggestions on formulating all the various forms of legislation to benefit Canadians. I don't want us to put them through the same thing again if this is what's to be expected.

The Chair: Perhaps we could ask our witnesses about their availability for Thursday.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Again, Madam Chair, it's not their availability. It is our duty—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, we can let you put your question to the witness.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

I'm looking at the witnesses and asking if they're available to come back on Thursday. I apologize for the problems today.

Mr. Ron Lemaire (President, Canadian Produce Marketing Association): Unfortunately, Madam Chair, I'm booked back to back all day Thursday.

The Chair: Okay. I apologize.

Mr. René Roy (Chair, Canadian Pork Council): We may be able to make it, but probably not in person.

Mr. Jeff English (Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Pulse Canada): We would be the same. Virtually would be an option.

The Chair: Mr. Chiasson-LeBel, would you be available on Thursday, sir?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Chiasson-LeBel (Assistant Professor, Université de l'Ontario français, As an Individual): Yes, I could free myself up. It's in the same time slot, I imagine.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. It would be the same time slot, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Chiasson-LeBel: Yes, I will free myself up.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, so we will try to have our witnesses come back on Thursday, either virtually or in person.

Is the ambassador...?

Okay. The ambassador is available on Thursday.

Is there agreement, then, that we will resume on Thursday, in person or virtually, with these witnesses, and the ambassador to follow, as was on the record for today?

Everybody's okay? All right. Then that's what we're doing.

Witnesses, it's now 4:52 p.m., according to the clock, so if you would like to leave, you are free to do so—or you can stay and enjoy the messaging.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: It's up to you.

Yes, Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I think it's great to see the Conservatives having a grand old time because they ruined the meeting. They're laughing about it, they're having fun, and they're saying they will be there. It just goes to show what a circus this is.

That being said, you're inviting the witnesses to stay. I'd like to make it clear that, if they decided to leave the meeting and this circus ended, their testimony wouldn't be swept under the rug. I want us to make sure of that. In other words, at the next meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday, if we were to finish this and there was time to begin the study, I'd like it to be made clear that our witnesses won't be penalized if they choose to leave.

I have one more point. I'd like to know why the notice of meeting indicated that, this time, the meeting would end at 6:00 p.m. I imagine it was to give the ambassador more time. Since there are no witnesses, can we finish at the usual time, 5:30 p.m.?

• (1650)

[English]

The Chair: We will, because if our witnesses leave and then our ambassador... We did that specifically in order to ensure the ambassador had a full hour. The ambassador will have a full hour on Thursday, which will be until 6:00 p.m. Tonight's meeting will end at 5:30, which is our normal time.

Does the committee want to suspend for a moment, while the witnesses leave? The witnesses are free to get up and leave...or stay.

You can pay money for this if you like, and you can't get that much entertainment. Thank you very much.

Mr. Baldinelli, you have the floor.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I'll continue. I was concluding here.

As we get back to how it all ties into why we're doing this now based on the Auditor General's report, the shocking results of this Auditor General's report must be followed up on to ensure it never happens again. How is this relevant to us, the members of the international trade committee? For one, we will immediately begin working on the study of another CBSA digitization project, CARM, which will have major impacts and ramifications on our import, export and brokerage sectors, impacting our supply chains.

That's why I believe it's relevant. That's why I ask it be added to the supply chain study. Again, we're not asking for the six meetings to be expanded upon; we're just saying that ArriveCAN should also be examined as part of that six-day study window.

I think it's a reasonable request, Madam Chair.

With that, I will conclude my comments.

The Chair: Mr. Miao.

Mr. Wilson Miao: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really feel bad for the witnesses who came here today. Hearing from the member opposite talking about his motion, there are a lot of things that are misleading Canadians. I represent the riding of

Richmond Centre, which is also an airport riding. With what we see now, it's completely different from what he has talked about. I'm not going to take up too much time, but I'd like to move to adjourn the debate.

The Chair: Mr. Miao has moved to adjourn the debate.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

• (1655)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I have another motion I would like to move forward.

The Chair: It's five o'clock.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'll introduce the motion. If my colleague wants to speak to it, then we can vote on it.

The Chair: Is it that same one?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: This is a second motion that I had put forward. I can read it into—

The Chair: You don't want to have a vote on the one you just spoke to for the last hour and a half.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: You just adjourned—

The Chair: Yes. I adjourned debate, so we can't do that one. We'll go on to another one.

Which one would you like?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, if I could, I'll read it into the record.

The Chair: Identify which one it is, because we have so many.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It deals with ArriveCAN—

The Chair: They all deal with it.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It has the September 18, 2023 date in there. It would have been identified as number 5 in the package that was sent out.

I'll read it:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study to review the government response dated September 18, 2023 to the study concerning The ArriveCAN Digital Tool: Impacts on Certain Canadian Sectors, and in light of recent findings about ArriveCAN revealed by the Auditor General of Canada, ensure that the government's response to this study remain relevant and that the government take immediate actions to ensure future applications impacting trade, travel and tourism are fully costed, budgeted, procured and accountable, so that this scandalous wasteful spending never happens again; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The Chair: I have Maninder, and then I have Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn the meeting today.

The Chair: We need a recorded vote on that.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: On a point of order, Madam Chair, in his statement, he said that Mr. Seeback was going to speak to it, and I had my hand up to speak to it, so I should have been the first person recognized to speak to it, not Mr. Sidhu.

The Chair: Just as Mr. Baldinelli went to introduce motion number 5, Mr. Sidhu put his arm up to speak, right at the very first word used. That's why I wrote that name down, and then I put down "Mr. Seeback". I put "Mr. Seeback" as he put his arm up and not because Mr. Baldinelli mentioned that he was going to be speaking.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: The Liberals on the committee are going to adjourn the meeting rather than have votes on ArriveCAN and the impact it's going to have on trade.

Effectively, the cover-up continues at another committee.

The Chair: Mr. Seeback, we have started the process of a vote, so we have—

Mr. Kyle Seeback: This is typical of the Liberal government.

The Chair: It is not.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: They try to shut down debate at committees on issues that are relevant to Canadians.

An hon. member: On a point of order—

Mr. Kyle Seeback: What Canadians are going to witness right now is that they are shutting down the committee meeting—

An hon. member: Let the member have the floor—

The Chair: You are out of order, Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: They're shutting down the committee meeting, so that we can't actually have a vote to look into the ArriveCAN app. This is your Liberal government in action.

The Chair: There are 25 other committees, the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General looking at it. It will be so thoroughly looked at that we will welcome the report that comes back.

We're taking a vote on adjourning the meeting.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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