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Chair: The Honourable Judy A. Sgro





## Standing Committee on International Trade

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

• (1125)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)):** [*Inaudible—Editor*] We were in committee business. There was a motion to go public. We have gone public.

Do you want to address the motion again, Mr. Lewis, and then we'll go for a vote?

**Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all the committee members for some discussion. I think it's a very important study for this committee, on many different aspects.

Madam Chair, I gave notice of motion:

That, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee on June 6 to undertake a study of the Potential Impacts of the ArriveCan Application on Certain Canadian Sectors, [that] the committee undertake five additional meetings under the study; that the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, the Minister of Tourism...and the Minister of Transport, each be invited to appear; and that, if possible, the meetings with the Ministers be televised; that additional witnesses be selected from lists provided by [all] parties; and that the Committee report back to the House of Commons.

Madam Chair, I would like to fix one thing that I said there, and that is to undertake three meetings, Madam Chair, not "five".

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Virani.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** I think that's helpful. We did have a discussion with Mr. Lewis and other colleagues from other parties during the adjournment. We are in favour of those changes. We just would ask that, as per the normal course, the invitation to the ministers be subject to their availability.

**The Chair:** Mr. Masse is next.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Lewis, for moving this motion. I support it entirely.

We did have one meeting on this. I want to go back to that testimony. We had testimony from CBSA officials that this was a temporary measure. I want to look at that testimony and see whether it was entirely factual. I appreciate following up on this, because ArriveCAN has caused significant problems for the auto industry, for tourism and even for family visitation.

As well, there are concerns over this being a reason to circumvent hiring customs officers. We've seen the loss of customs officers at a number of different facilities and locations, and they have been quite clear as to the stress they've had. In fact, I'm told that some of them were on mandatory overtime this summer because there has been a lack of process in actually hiring and retaining officers. I think that should be part of what we need to do here.

This is one issue on the border particularly, but it's an important issue that needs to be addressed, especially because ArriveCAN was described as something that was related to the pandemic as to its implementation. As we're going through this current stage right now, and from some of the information that we've received, that doesn't seem to be the case; it's now a policy that has existed beyond what it was supposedly intentionally created for. Hopefully, we can get some research done by the clerk or our team as to when the contracts went out for ArriveCAN. I'd be interested to know whether it was an in-house design or whether it was contracted out to a third party. I'd like to find out how the government went about creating the app to begin with, when that took place, who actually created it and what the contract was. It would be nice to have some of that information in front of us, because we're dealing with a particular situation here.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the committee.

• (1130)

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

We have Mr. Baldinelli.

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to my colleagues. I think this is an excellent opportunity for us to pick up on the study that we paused just before the summer break.

If you look at the StatsCan data on leading tourism indicators, which was published recently, land border crossings were at 1.1 million. That's still 50% below 2019 levels. All three of our communities—Mr. Masse's, Mr. Lewis's and mine—are border communities. I have four international bridges in my community alone. Tourism employs 40,000 people in my riding. For three years, essentially, we've lost our tourism seasons because of COVID. The first two years it was essentially because of COVID. This third year, because of delays and having ArriveCAN in place, it has been self-inflicted. It's a disappointment to see that it's still in place, when over 60 countries in the world have dropped their border restrictions for travel. It's something that needs to be examined. My hope is that it will eventually be dropped so that we can facilitate tourism visitations back to Niagara, to get back to those 2019 numbers.

It's critically important for our sector. I was pleased to host our shadow critic in August. She came down and she spoke to stakeholders. They told her the difficulties they're facing. My understanding was that the Ontario Liberal caucus met in Niagara for two days and had a tour of the Niagara Parks Commission. Well, I was their communications manager for 18 years. The Niagara Parks Commission is a provincial agency of the government. It doesn't rely on any operational funding from the Government of Ontario. It was established in 1885. Only Banff National Park is older than it. In 2019 it generated \$127 million in revenue, as a self-funding agency. In the first year of COVID the Province of Ontario had to give it \$13 million. That's how devastated Niagara was because of COVID and because programs such as ArriveCAN limited—essentially closed—the borders and stopped visitation from coming in.

The Minister of Tourism is starting a new national tourism strategy. We need to remove the hindrances and allow our tourism stakeholders to do what they do best, and that's welcome people from throughout the world. ArriveCAN does nothing to help us do that. I'm fully supportive of this.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Lewis.

**Mr. Chris Lewis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all committee members.

It's not part of the motion, Madam Chair. I would just ask for consideration from the chair and from the committee that the study, if passed here at committee, would commence on September 22. I understand that ministers are very busy and they may not be here on September 27, but perhaps in those three days, we'll be able to figure out our schedules.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Virani.

**Mr. Arif Virani:** That's why I was just proposing, Madam Chair, that after the list of ministers, where it has, "each be invited to appear", we just inject the words, "subject to their availability".

**The Chair:** All right. That's to be included in the motion. Again, it will always be subject to availability and also to getting a witness list, which we will need to have very quickly in order to move on.

**Mr. Chris Lewis:** I understand, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** All right, I'll ask for a recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Dancella Boyi):** The vote is on the motion by Mr. Lewis.

Would you like me to reread it?

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Yes. Let's make sure it's very clear so we all know what we're doing.

**The Clerk:** It is as follows:

That, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee on June 6, 2022, to undertake a study of the Potential Impacts of the ArriveCAN Application on Certain Canadian Sectors, the committee undertake three additional meetings under the study; that the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, the Minister of Tourism, and the Minister of Transport each be invited to appear as of September 27, 2022, and subject to their availability; that, if possible, the meetings with the ministers be televised; that additional witnesses be selected from lists provided by the parties; and that the committee report back to the House of Commons.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** We will now go back and continue with our in camera discussions.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







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