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• (0820)

[English]

The Chair (Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 15 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, September 18, 2025, the committee is resuming its study on the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada.

Today's meeting, of course, is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders.

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

First, please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation, either the floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

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. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

Colleagues, I would now like to welcome our witnesses for today.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a brief point of order. I will be brief here as I'm eager to hear the minister.

At the last meeting, you ended it by dabbing out, as it is colloquially known, or adjourning it without having the will of the committee. That is a breach of the privilege of the members here. We have seen you be an excellent chair in the past, but we were deeply troubled by that. We would ask that in the future you ensure that you have the will of the room before adjourning a meeting.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lawrence. I appreciate those comments. I apologize to members.

We have appearing before us today, colleagues, the Honourable Wayne Long, Secretary of State for the Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions.

Welcome to you, sir. It's good to have here.

From the Canada Revenue Agency, we have Jean-François Fortin, deputy commissioner; Marc Lemieux, assistant commissioner, compliance programs branch; Mohammad Rahman, director general, business compliance directorate, collections and verification branch.

Welcome to all of you. Thanks for joining us.

I would also like to have a special welcome to all the Canadians who are watching us early this morning, including my son Anderson, who is celebrating his 11th birthday.

Happy Birthday to you, Anderson.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Mr. Secretary, it's now a pleasure for me to turn the floor over to you. You have five minutes for your opening remarks, sir.

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions)): Thank you, Chair.

Good morning to members of the committee and good morning to Canadians watching, and happy birthday to your son. I'm sure he is up watching you.

I want to start by thanking you for the work you do. I have obviously been blessed to be here—I'm in my eleventh year now—and I sat on HUMA for 10 years and know the important work committees do for our government and for our country. To everybody around the horseshoe, I want to thank you sincerely for the work you do.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and to discuss the work Canada's new government and the Canada Revenue Agency have undertaken to uphold tax compliance in the trucking industry. Trucking is vital to connecting Canada's vast and expansive territory and bridging our united economies, but not at the expense of industry standards and tax obligations.

Too many trucking companies and the drivers they hire are in non-compliance with tax obligations. Some companies erroneously and deliberately misclassify their truck drivers as independent contractors instead of staff employees. These practices undercut competition in the sector, unevenly punish rule-abiding companies and deprive workers of the benefits and pensions they are owed.

That is why, to restore fairness to the sector and to ensure workers are receiving the benefits they deserve, the budget we announced earlier this week would provide \$77 million over four years starting in 2026-27, with ongoing funding of \$19.2 million annually, for the Canada Revenue Agency to lift the moratorium on the penalties for failure to report fees for service transactions in the trucking industry and to implement a focused program that addresses non-compliance issues related to personal service businesses and reporting fees for service.

Our budget also proposes amending the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act to allow the Canada Revenue Agency to share taxpayer information and confidential information as it relates to the classification of workers with Employment and Social Development Canada. This would provide Employment and Social Development Canada with access to better information, which could in turn allow it to more effectively address the issue of driver misclassification in the trucking industry.

Strengthening compliance would address long-standing concerns raised over tax avoidance schemes and ensure proper contributions to the programs and services Canadians rely on. Compliance with reporting requirements would also help level the playing field for responsible businesses and protect workers' rights.

Trucking companies that follow the rules should not be put at a disadvantage to those who do not. With the budget measures we are proposing, we would level the playing field, strengthening tax compliance to ensure that everyone pays their fair share in supporting the programs and services Canadians depend on and ensure access to benefits for workers in a key sector of our economy.

In closing, before my wonderful life in politics, I was in an industry that relied heavily on shipping its products from coast to coast to coast and north to south. I know first-hand how critical it is to support our truckers and strengthen our trucking industry. I know how important it is to our economy. I know how important it is to our trade to have a healthy trucking industry. I am very proud we are coming forth with these measures in budget 2025 to take action to make sure that fair players are rewarded and bad actors are caught.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary of State.

We'll begin our line of questioning today with Mr. Albas.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours. You have six minutes, sir.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Secretary of State Long and your officials, for your ongoing commitment to our great country.

Do you prefer being addressed as "Secretary" or "Minister"?

• (0825)

Hon. Wayne Long: It's whatever you want. I get "Secretary", I get "Minister" and I get "Wayne".

Dan Albas: Okay, Secretary.

Hon. Wayne Long: Yes.

Dan Albas: Secretary, you mentioned the information-sharing agreement that would be authorized by Parliament.

What happened to Bill C-59?

Hon. Wayne Long: I think for us right now, it's important to look forward and do what's necessary going forward. I was sworn in as secretary on May 13. I don't believe in looking backwards. We can—

Dan Albas: I'm glad you don't believe in looking backward, Secretary.

Hon. Wayne Long: We can debate—

Dan Albas: Just getting to the point, Bill C-59 would have authorized the same thing. It was killed by the decision of this Prime Minister, Mark Carney, to go to a spring election. I just wanted to make sure that everyone here knows that your government said it had a fix and brought that forward in the previous Parliament and instead allowed it to lapse.

I don't take any of the things you said today in those information-sharing agreements, as important as they are.... I just want you to bear some responsibility. I do know that you're new here.

Secretary, I will move to the next part here.

When will this new system for T4As be implemented? Do you have a date?

Hon. Wayne Long: I was sworn in in May 2025. We took immediate action. I recognized that the Driver Inc. issue was a problem. I heard from Canadians. I've heard from colleagues on both sides of the House.

Respectfully, through you, Mr. Chair, my hope is that we have put these measures into budget 2025. My hope is that your party will actually support our budget and pass our budget so we can move forward with these measures.

Dan Albas: I'm glad that you're hopeful. I'm also hopeful for an answer.

When will there be actual changes at CRA that enforce the rules as they exist, which they have not been enforcing?

Hon. Wayne Long: I think the first step is to actually pass the budget so we can move these measures forward. If you want to pin me down to an actual date, I can't give you a date within a month or two.

Dan Albas: Will it be one year or two years?

Hon. Wayne Long: With respect, I think the question back to you is whether your party is prepared to pass the budget. With these measures we are committing \$77.6 million in this budget over four years and \$19.2 million—

Dan Albas: Four years is what you're saying?

Hon. Wayne Long:—each year after to up enforcement and to make sure that moratorium is lifted.

Dan Albas: Secretary, I think you know clearly where my party is on it.

Hon. Wayne Long: I think the party—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I'm going to take some of my time here.

Secretary, I asked you a very simple question.

If this budget were to pass tomorrow—probably not with the support of the Conservative Party, but if it did pass—are we talking one year, two years, three years or the four years you have been talking about? Can you not answer a simple question on something that is directly under your responsibility?

Hon. Wayne Long: The first step is to pass the budget. The next step is for us to take that and go through the process. I would say soon after... If you want to pin me down to an actual month or day, I'm not going to do that. The first step for us is to pass budget 2025. I'm hoping the members on your side will actually support the budget. There are a lot of great measures in the budget. It's a generational budget. We don't hear a lot of positive comments from your side about that.

The first step is that this measure is in budget 2025. For me—

Dan Albas: The Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association came here. I asked them specifically if you had spoken to them about this. They had not heard from you. We have had every single trucking association, including the Canadian Trucking Alliance, which represents the trucking industry right across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. Their number one ask was this.

If you can't give us a date, sir, why would we want to support a budget if you can't even say with any sense that within four years you can get this done.

I think it falls on you, sir, to be able to give us at least a date within the next four years.

When will this collection happen? Tell it to the Canadian Trucking Alliance and all the trucking firms that came in, when you're going to be doing your job.

Hon. Wayne Long: We are committed to making this happen. Step one is to pass the budget, which clearly your party has a lot of

hesitation to do. This is puzzling to me. That's what we see on the other side. I think my record shows.... I have a business background before politics. I'm a man of action. I want results. I believe in accountability. I come from that environment. We will endeavour to make this happen as soon as we can.

• (0830)

Dan Albas: I'm really glad that someone knows how to sign the front end of a cheque and not just the backside. It's important in government to have all of those perspectives in there.

I will say that if I were looking to hire a firm that couldn't tell me if it would take my money and was unable to give me a firm date on when it would start working and getting those results, when I gave it a four-year window to do so, that would not be a firm I'd want to do business with.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Albas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor for six minutes.

Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the Secretary of State and the officials for being here today. It's a pleasure to have them here to discuss this issue that is very important to us all.

Mr. Secretary of State, you spoke a lot about the Income Tax Act and the importance of applying it properly. Mr. Albas asked a pretty important question about how and when the government is going to amend this legislation.

For the benefit of this committee, can you clarify your thoughts on how this legislation will directly affect businesses?

Based on your experience in the transportation sector, how do you think this legislation, which we are going to amend soon or later, will improve the income of businesses and the well-being of employees who drive trucks?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: Thank you very much for the question. It's great to see you.

We, as a government, and I, as secretary of state, recognize that this has been an issue. The trucking industry is of vital importance to our economy, our supply chain and our distribution. The fact is that a situation has developed that has treated companies that play by the rules unfairly and has put them at a competitive disadvantage. You could argue that sometimes, it's up to a 20-cent-per-mile or 30-cent-per-mile disadvantage. We need to act and we need to correct that.

If our trucking industry is not healthy, supply chain-wise, we're not getting products competitively from coast to coast to coast and from north and south. I look at it as two things.

As a company that ships products using trucking companies that play by the rules, I would get such-and-such a price per pound to ship products. My competitor, which may be using a trucking company that uses Drivers Inc., is getting a cheaper price. Company to company, they're shipping their products at a competitive disadvantage. That's number one.

Number two, the trucking companies that compete and play by the rules, that pay their employees and deduct CPP, EI and benefits, etc., versus those that do the PSP—they just pay an amount of money and don't make deductions—are not competitive. We need to correct that as a government.

As I said to the member earlier, I'm not about the past and about why we didn't do this or that. Here we are now. We're a new government with a new Prime Minister and a new mandate and we're taking action to correct this problem once and for all.

There's \$77.6 million over four years and \$19.2 million each year after that to ramp up enforcement and make sure that the moratorium is lifted. That's a great thing. The member asked when it would be. You know what? It will be soon after we pass this budget. I'm driven; I'm a man of action. We will get this done, but the first step is to pass the budget. The member previously said to me, "You can't commit to this". My comment back is that they can't seem to commit to whether or not they're going to support our budget.

We want to make sure that we level the playing field. We want to make sure that people who abide by the rules are treated fairly and are competitive, and that bad actors are caught, because there's also a public safety issue on our highways. We want to make sure that our highways and roads are safe. We want to make sure that people are trained, have the support they need and the equipment they need. What's been developing, sadly, over several years has been the opposite. We have bad players and untrained drivers, so we need to fix that. We're coming forth with these measures in this budget.

I thank transportation for taking this issue on. We have a solution, and I expect all parties in the House to support it.

Thank you.

● (0835)

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: You talked about compliance issues. You also mentioned another element, which is the transmission of information.

In your opinion, how important is the transmission of information to solving the problem associated with the "Driver Inc." model?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: Number one, we want to lift the moratorium, and we do want to share information between ESDC and CRA to make sure that we can identify and catch people who aren't play-

ing by the rules. Again, the first step is to pass what's in the budget. We have committed to that. We have identified the problem. I was put in this position to act, to identify problems and to find solutions for them.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Do you have many files—

The Chair: Unfortunately, your time is up, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Thank you, Mr. Secretary of State.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary of State, thank you for being with us today. We have been looking forward to it for a long time.

Representatives of trucking associations have mentioned to the committee, but also outside this committee, that associations have been fighting for a very long time—since 2018—for the government to act on the Driver Inc. truckers issue.

However, it so happens that you have just added measures regarding the famous T4A slips. It also so happens that we just did a study at the committee and that we've been hounding you for two months on the issue of Driver Inc. truckers.

I assume there's not necessarily a lot of chance in the timing of the announcement of the T4A slips, but we're still not going to complain about it.

We had proposed 10 solutions to the government to solve the problem related to the "Driver Inc." model. You picked one.

Why didn't you go with the other nine?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: Thank you for that.

I also want to congratulate the Bloc. I know this part was one of the solutions you proposed.

We want to move one step at a time, and to us, the first step is to lift the moratorium that came in, I believe, under the Harper government in 2011. I believe in basically taking this one step at a time, and I think that—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I appreciate that.

You're saying you're starting with that measure, and that's fine. That's a first step.

Do you have a plan for the next steps? Can we expect another one of those 10 measures to be put in place?

I can give you some examples. One of the solutions we proposed is that the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, and Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, conduct joint and systematic audits for any new business with no employees in the trucking sector. Not only would that information be shared with ESDC and CRA, but it would also be shared with provincial authorities.

Is that something your government is committed to doing?

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: We will look at different options moving forward. There are obviously privacy issues that we want to respect with regard to Canadians.

I'm satisfied that we are taking the right steps right now, and the first step is to allocate money in the budget, which is for \$77.6 million over four years, not—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Do you agree that the implementation of the T4A slip measure and the supplementary estimates alone will not solve the problem related to the “Driver Inc.” model?

Do you think that will solve everything?

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: I think the witnesses you've had so far are very supportive of our move in budget 2025. The CEO or the president of the CTA is very supportive, and they spoke publicly of the moves we're making in budget 2025.

I live by an adage that to stand still is to go backwards, so we're always going to look for ways to move forward. We're always going to look for ways to improve—

• (0840)

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I understand that they said they agreed with that, but—

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: —and I think that, in the budget, what we're doing—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Secretary of State, it isn't just the Bloc Québécois that is proposing these 10 measures, it's all the industry representatives who took part in our press conference. They too were calling for the nine other measures, which you haven't committed to implementing.

You mentioned that you're going to have more funding to address this issue, which is very good news.

Let's take the example of ESDC, which has received \$26 million since 2022. Only 17 administrative monetary penalties have been issued in the trucking sector, and 75% of those 17 have not been paid.

What kind of result can we expect from you?

Can we expect more ambitious results than we've seen so far?

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: I'm very confident and very comfortable in the work that the CRA is doing. Since 2014, the CRA has conducted 45,000 compliance actions related to businesses in the trucking industry, representing a fiscal impact of \$1.7 billion. Actually, to come up to 2022, it has done 14,000 compliance actions, with a fiscal impact of \$784 million.

Just to deviate a bit, I think you'll look at the progress that the CRA is making on our 100-day plan with respect to responses to Canadians. I'm very confident and comfortable that CRA has the tools it needs. Obviously, it's a work in progress, a moving target, but—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: You say that you are satisfied with the work that has been done, Mr. Secretary of State, but—

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: —I'm very comfortable that we have what we need to—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: The Canada Revenue Agency website has a directory of enforcement notifications. This provides information on companies that have been prosecuted and convicted of tax fraud.

Can you tell me how many companies in the trucking industry have been convicted of tax fraud in the last five years?

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: I don't have that number.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have the answer, Mr. Secretary of State.

Only one company has been convicted of tax fraud in the last five years. That was in 2021. Since then, from 2021 to today, there have been no convictions. No new trucking companies have been convicted of tax evasion.

Do you think that's normal?

The Chair: Mr. Long, you have 10 seconds to answer the question.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Long: I think the first step for us is to actually lift the moratorium. We're doing that. We're allocating resources to CRA.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I asked you whether you think it's normal for the Canada Revenue Agency to be reporting such results so far.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Thank you very much, Secretary of State.

Next we'll go to Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours, and you have five minutes.

Philip Lawrence: Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I want to carry on from where my Bloc colleague left off in talking about some of the investigative work. Even though new monies have been announced in the budget, there were actually monies announced in 2023 for a similar project—\$23 million over five years, which equates to about \$5 million per year.

We received testimony earlier that there were 129 successful reclassifications, each of which cost \$77,000. What would be the goal of the average cost of a reclassification from these additional monies being announced?

Hon. Wayne Long: I would say this. If you want to look at just cost versus benefits, you'll see that we're going to invest \$77 million over four years, and then \$19.2 million for the years after that. This will produce additional revenue of \$160 million. I'm very comfortable—

Philip Lawrence: On that, Minister, how much additional revenue has the reclassification created over the two years that have gone by?

Hon. Wayne Long: Can you repeat that question?

Philip Lawrence: You've already been at this for two years. You spent \$10 million in the last two fiscal years reclassifying drivers; you have 129. How much money has been generated for the treasury?

Hon. Wayne Long: I would say that I'm very comfortable with what the CRA is doing and with the compliance actions it is taking.

• (0845)

Philip Lawrence: I realize that, and I don't want to be rude, but I did ask a specific question. You've made projections, so you must know what you've done so far. How much is that? I just want a number.

Hon. Wayne Long: I think the fact that we're making this measure and we're taking this investment of \$77 million over four years to ramp up compliance, to catch bad actors...we are projecting \$160 million—

Philip Lawrence: How much over the last two years have you generated from the reclassification efforts, where you spent \$10 million?

Hon. Wayne Long: What we're doing will work. I think we will level the playing field. I think that once and for all we're going to actually—

Philip Lawrence: Minister, how many reclassifications will you accomplish over the next five years? It's all good to hear about money being spent, but if it's accomplishing nothing, it's of no value.

Hon. Wayne Long: I would reject the premise of that—the fact that you would say it's accomplishing nothing. The actions we're taking in budget 2025 are huge. I think they're—

Philip Lawrence: How many reclassifications will the \$77 million account for?

Hon. Wayne Long: What we're doing shows that we will produce more revenue than the expense, and the fact that we're going to—

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Long, what's the difference between an independent contractor and an employee?

Hon. Wayne Long: The fact that we're going to actually put \$77 million—

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Long, what's the difference between an employee and—

Mike Kelloway (Sydney—Gloucester, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Just very quickly—and this is not to disturb the questions—but I think we're at a point now where the interpreters are going to have a hard time. I wonder if we could ask a question and then answer a question.

The Chair: Mr. Lawrence, I'm going to add 15 seconds here just so that you can ensure the responses....

I would like to ask all members to ensure that we're giving witnesses a chance to respond, to the benefit and health of our interpreters.

Thank you.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Long, what's the difference between an independent contractor and an employee?

Hon. Wayne Long: I was a small business guy. We used both. I would pay employees. They would deduct—

Philip Lawrence: How is a truck driver supposed to know whether he's an independent contractor or an employee if the secretary of state for CRA doesn't know what it is?

Hon. Wayne Long: Can you repeat that question?

Philip Lawrence: What is the difference between an independent contractor and an employee?

Hon. Wayne Long: An employee is paid through your payroll. There are deductions taken.

Philip Lawrence: How are you supposed to—

Hon. Wayne Long: An independent contractor is an independent contractor; he's an independent business person. He'd be incorporated. He makes his own deductions. He pays his own salary. The issue has been that T4As haven't been issued.

Is that what you mean?

I was a small business guy—

Philip Lawrence: Some of these folks are bad actors, but some of them just don't know whether they are an independent contractor or employee.

What are the distinguishing points between an independent contractor and an employee?

Hon. Wayne Long: Once we solve the T4A issue that Stephen Harper created in 2011, independent contractors will get issued a T4A. The Harper government put in a moratorium in 2011 to lift penalties.

Philip Lawrence: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 25 seconds.

Hon. Wayne Long: The issue between an employee and an independent contractor couldn't be more different.

Philip Lawrence: I will take the last 25 seconds.

I'll just end here. Thank you, Minister.

It is clear that the minister does not know the difference between an independent contractor and an employee, yet he's going to be fining business people who, in some cases, are just innocently attempting to run their businesses.

If the guy who is in charge of the entire department doesn't know this, what chance does a truck driver have?

The Chair: Than you very much, Mr. Lawrence.

Next we'll go to Ms. Nguyen.

The floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Good morning, everyone. Thank you to my colleague for being here this morning and to the officials from the ministry.

We have heard throughout this study from many witnesses who have called for reinstating the T4A reporting penalties. As we all know, we have this opportunity with budget 2025 to do just that.

Can you tell me about what this change will mean in terms of compliance expectations and enforcement timelines? How do we send a really strong signal to the bad actors—not the folks who are paying their taxes, doing all of the appropriate things as independent contractors and complying appropriately—through the compliance mechanisms that this is not acceptable?

Hon. Wayne Long: Thank you for the question.

I would say that the first step is to take the initiatives that we're taking in budget 2025.

That's the first step. We are going to lift the moratorium on issuing T4As. Why the Harper government did that in 2011 is beyond me. It's created a problem.

Our new government was elected in April and I was sworn in in May, and we're going to address the problem. There are many layers to the problem.

From a shipper's standpoint, for a shipper who ships beef, plays by the rules and uses a trucking company that plays by the rules, that's how it should be. They should compete against others like those in this example—other beef shippers and other trucking companies—but when you have instances of companies that are, number one, encouraging Drivers Inc. and you have drivers calling legitimate companies and asking if they will accept Drivers Inc. companies, you have, number two, a multi-layered problem. It lessens competition, creates havoc in the industry and rewards unfair players.

It's no secret that we're a big country. It's no secret that we have distribution problems. I've lived that. It's tough to get products from coast to coast to coast in an efficient price-competitive manner.

In the mainstream, there are 300,000 truckers in this country. When that industry is thrown into havoc by truckers and trucking companies that compete against bad actors, it weakens those companies. We saw at this committee the stories from family-owned companies that are literally telling their kids to get out of the business. That's pretty sad to see. We see some of that in New Brunswick too.

We want to strengthen that industry. We want those companies that are family-run good businesses to thrive and to be competitive, but we're undermining it by keeping that moratorium in place.

I've identified the problem. I like to think that I take action when I see issues. I'm not perfect all of the time. I want to try to fix this. It's a problem, and we're going to fix it.

We're going to fix it through the budget. We've allocated money. The CRA is now going to be equipped to enforce...and we're going to lift that moratorium so that we can make sure that companies know that: "Hey, I'm going to issue T4As now, because if I don't, I'm going to be penalized".

We want to strengthen the industry. If we strengthen the industry, we'll be competitive. It strengthens our economy. I'm proud of the measures we're taking. Hopefully, the Conservatives will support our budget.

● (0850)

Chi Nguyen: This is just a quick question: What do the penalties look like for bad actors? I'm curious if you know what that might look like.

Hon. Wayne Long: There would be fines involved, obviously on the scale of the incident. If there's one small company and one T4A, or a larger company that's encouraging it, the fines would scale. In the end, we want to move forward. We want to up enforcement measures.

Passing the budget is going to require opposition members, hopefully, to support it. We have a lot of great measures in the budget. It's a generational budget that's going to transform our country. We're going to build our economy. We're going to invest in each other. Thankfully the Conservatives will come on board and support it.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Nguyen.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Secretary of State, according to Employment and Social Development Canada, non-compliant companies simply disappear as soon as they see auditors coming. They vanish into thin air reappear under a different name. That makes it hard to catch them at fault.

That's why I was asking you to automatically audit all new trucking companies that have no employees.

That said, another deterrent could be taken to prevent companies from systematically reappearing under another name. It would be to publish the names of directors and companies that are involved in this type of activity. The Canada Revenue Agency doesn't currently have a policy of publishing the names of businesses that have been caught.

Do you intend to change that measure?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: There are privacy issues, obviously, that the CRA or we would have to respect. A blanket disclosure of names would go against privacy, and there are probably better ways of enforcement. Again, this is clearly a measure that's going to—

• (0855)

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I understand your point of view, but I'm going to take the liberty of strongly disagreeing. If the offending companies continually reappear under another name, we're not solving the problem. However, we know that this is a common practice in the field.

Secretary of State, in the last five years only one company has been convicted of tax evasion in court, and that was the last time it happened, five years ago.

On the one hand, I find that totally unacceptable. On the other hand, you should know that, while the government is twiddling its thumbs, we have lost 1,000 jobs in the trucking industry in Quebec. These are honest people. These are businesses that used to operate within the law and are now struggling to survive because of these companies.

I find that unacceptable, and I find it hard to understand how this situation can happen, for there to be so little intervention by the government and the authorities if there's no political directive behind it.

I would just like some reassurance. Have you issued any political directives to prevent any coercion?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: We're going, first and foremost, to pass this budget. We recognized that there was an issue and we're addressing the issue. We're putting money in our budget. We're going to have \$77.6 million and \$19.2 million each year after that for enforcement. I'm very confident and comfortable in the ability of the CRA to enforce.... Obviously, we're going to respect privacy issues, but—

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: So no heads are going to roll. You're happy with that outcome.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Long: —we will take this one step at a time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Next we have Mr. Muys.

Mr. Muys, it's good to have you back at committee. The floor is yours, sir. You have five minutes.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): All right. Thank you.

You talked about potential fines. You talked about the deductions that are being omitted by those who are taking advantage of the system.

Hon. Wayne Long: You mean independent contractors.

Dan Muys: Independent contractors.... Oh, sure, we'll use that [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Has the CRA quantified at all the amount of revenue that will be gained from this change, from this new model?

Hon. Wayne Long: We're projecting that the CRA will bring in revenue of \$160 million over four years. We're going to invest \$77 million to up enforcement, and we believe.... The number we've been working with is \$160 million, if that's what you mean. Is that your question, or are you talking about what the cost to the economy is or what the loss is—

Dan Muys: What's the actual revenue that the government is going to see in the treasury as a result?

Hon. Wayne Long: Yes, it would be \$160 million over four years.

Dan Muys: Okay.

Doing some backward math then, with \$77 million invested and \$160 million gained.... We don't know the amount of enforcement that's going to take place and how many drivers or independent contractors are going to be sought out with this measure over four years.

Hon. Wayne Long: The CRA is doing compliance actions now. Once the CRA issues T4As.... Again, the problem is that, without a penalty for not issuing T4As.... I've been in business. There would be no incentive, at times, to issue them. If they're not issued, we can't find them; they're not in the system. Once more T4As are issued, that allows the CRA to track, to audit and to do compliance checks, so I think it's somewhat self-fulfilling. Once the moratorium is lifted, there are going to be all kinds of opportunities for the CRA to actually do checks and catch bad actors—

Dan Muys: However, some of those—

Hon. Wayne Long: —and people who aren't issuing T4As. We all know what happens.

Dan Muys: Some of those bad actors over the course of the last two years, without this lifting, have been discovered. Isn't that correct?

Hon. Wayne Long: That's right.

Dan Muys: Can you not extrapolate from that how many bad actors are going to be caught?

• (0900)

Hon. Wayne Long: We will continue to do compliance checks, audits, and check bad actors. I'm absolutely convinced the \$77.6 million that we are investing in this budget will...

Again, let's be clear. There's not going to be a definitive moment when this is fixed. This is a moving target. It's evolving. I believe that \$77.6 million is a big first step. I think that lifting the moratorium that the Harper government put in, in 2011, is a great step.

We are determined to strengthen the trucking industry. I know the trucking industry is extremely supportive, and we're very confident in these measures.

Dan Muys: Right, but we heard from the trucking industry. With all due respect, to point to something that took place 14 years ago to sort of absolve yourself of responsibility is fairly rich, because, obviously, this whole dumpster fire has festered over the last.... We heard that very clearly from the Canadian Trucking Alliance, and, frankly, not just at these hearings. I've been on this committee since 2021. We've had the Canadian Trucking Alliance here previously. We had those discussions. We've heard this, and no action was taken.

There's been talk of a joint task force and interdepartmental cooperation. That's what you're aiming for with these provisions, but, obviously, that's also taken place over the last couple of years.

Are there any actual measurable outcomes for what that looks like in terms of fines? In reference to a previous question, I know you talked about fines being scalable, but is there a target for the number of prosecutions and fines? What does enforcement actually look like?

Hon. Wayne Long: When we allocate \$77.6 million to the CRA, which we're allocating in the budget, it's going to up the enforcement efforts. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that when that moratorium is lifted and companies have T4As in the system, there will be more compliance checks and audits. We'll be able to catch and find bad actors.

We're projecting that this measure will generate \$160 million, versus an investment, if you will, of \$77 million.

You know what? On this one, it's not even really about the \$160 million versus the \$77 million to me. It's about levelling the playing field. It's about creating a stronger and healthier trucking industry for our country.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Finally, for this round, we have Mr. Kelloway for five minutes.

Mike Kelloway: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to see the secretary of state and the department here.

My questions are going to focus on the department, and not the secretary of state, so you can drink your water, secretary of state, for at least five minutes.

The Bloc and the Conservatives are working together to pass a motion to have the CRA provide years of sensitive tax information. The motion calls for all documents, emails, and texts related to compliance. I'm just wondering if you could give us a sense of how much that would cost.

We've seen, at this committee, production of documents being leaked to media by members of the committee.

My second question is, what are the offences? I'm wondering if you could spend some time on this. What are the offences of or fines on someone who's providing the personal tax information of Canadians without their consent? That goes for everyone in this room.

[*Translation*]

Jean-François Fortin (Deputy Commissioner, Canada Revenue Agency): Thank you for the question.

I don't know if we'll be in a position to answer the first part of the question about the costs associated with a request to produce documents. First, we need to know a little more about the nature of the request and what it involves. We can follow up with the committee on that.

The same is true for sentences and penalties, but this issue is fundamental. First, it concerns the application of section 241 of the Income Tax Act, which, as you know, protects confidential information related to Canadian taxpayers.

We have a voluntary system. Through this system, the CRA gets highly sensitive information from all Canadians, and we need to protect that information. The worst penalty is a criminal offence, which can eventually lead to imprisonment. It's a serious matter. That explains why, at the CRA, we need to keep that information and put measures in place to protect it.

It also explains why the CRA can only disclose this type of information under certain circumstances. The decision to disclose must be based on memoranda of understanding and provisions of the act. However, in the absence of specific provisions allowing for the disclosure of confidential information, the CRA and each of its employees have an obligation to take measures to prevent confidential information from being shared outside the organization.

• (0905)

[English]

Mike Kelloway: Thank you for that answer, in particular to the last question I asked about sensitive information, the fines and the consequences.

I must say that I said a little fib on my part, Secretary of State, as I am going to ask you a couple of questions, if that's okay.

I think that throughout this particular testimony, what I've liked is your experience in the private sector as a business owner. You can relate a lot to this file and, in particular, to the issue of Drivers Inc. Again, I think it's really important to stress the importance of the passing of this budget, because there are solutions on the table within this budget.

You've talked about the financial aspect. I want you to talk a little bit, if you can in the moments we have, to unpack in layman's terms, for those watching at home or those who will read the transcripts, what this money will do to initiate solutions, if you could.

Hon. Wayne Long: Thank you for the question, and good morning.

To your point, before I was blessed with an opportunity in politics, I was a small business owner. I worked for an international corporation, dealt with a lot of shippers and did a lot of shipping. Cents per pound is the difference at times for a shipper, or a company that is shipping, between being in business and not being in business, number one.

There are times when shippers may be tempted to go with a lower rate. That's fair; that's business, but if that lower rate is there because that player plays unfairly, doesn't pay his taxes, doesn't do his deductions, and who maybe doesn't train his workers and provides inferior equipment, it's not what will build our economy and make our sectors and economy strong. We need to correct that. That has been something that needs to be corrected.

Obviously you've had lots of testimony here at committee, and we're taking action. We're a new government. We were elected on April 28. I remember that day. I'm sure all members remember that day. I was given the privilege of having this role. I came into this role saying, "I'm going to take action. I'm going to identify problems, and I'm going to try to fix things in inequities I see". This was an inequity. It was not a level and fair playing field for truckers and for shippers.

Hon. Wayne Long: The actions we're taking in this generational, transformational budget are going to correct that.

Thank you.

Mike Kelloway: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On behalf of all members, Mr. Secretary of State, I just want to say thank you to you and your team for being here this morning.

Hon. Wayne Long: It was a pleasure.

The Chair: Colleagues, I'm going to suspend for a couple of minutes to allow us to transition to the next round of witnesses.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

• (0905)

(Pause)

• (0915)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Colleagues, I'd now like to welcome our witnesses for the second panel.

From the Canada Revenue Agency, we have Jean-François Fortin, deputy commissioner; Marc Lemieux, assistant commissioner, compliance programs branch; and Mohammad Rahman, director general of business compliance directorate, collections and verification branch.

Welcome to all of you, and thank you for being here this morning.

We're going to go straight into our round of questions, and for that, we're going to turn to Mr. Albas.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Dan Albas: Thank you. I appreciate it, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our officials for being present here today and for their ongoing commitment to our country.

I asked the secretary of state a very pointed question. If the budget were to pass and if these provisions were to come into play, what is the timeline we would be looking at for implementation? We would like to understand when these measures would come into force.

Jean-François Fortin: Upon approval from Parliament, we would be able to move forward. There is a moratorium in place. T4As exist already and the penalty system exists as well, so we could implement this in a very short time frame.

I would like to add that the second part of the proposal is also to add resources, or a compliance team focused on or devoted to that. We need to put that together, but we're already working on this issue, so it would add to the effort we are doing.

The first part would be on the T4A for the reporting of the truckers' corporations to make sure they are fulfilling this part of their obligation and responsibility, and to apply the penalties.

The second part of the compliance issue is Driver Inc. By the way, it's not an illegal model, but if you are with Driver Inc., you need to respect your tax obligations. You need to pay the taxes, and there are some deductions you can't claim. The tax rate is higher, but with the T4As we would receive, we would be in a position to identify those PSBs and be in a better position to intervene.

I also want to underline that education would also continue to be an important part of the equation. It's not only going to be about compliance and enforcement.

● (0920)

Dan Albas: Okay, thank you for that answer.

Mr. Chair, I forgot to mention that I'm going to be splitting my time with Mr. Barsalou-Duval, so I'll pass it on to him.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the last two meetings, we've had discussions about adding more meetings to this study to bring in witnesses and to get documents. I think it's important that the committee make a decision before the end of this meeting, given that this is the last scheduled meeting on the subject.

I'm going to move a motion that essentially combines the two motions that have already been introduced at previous meetings.

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue and Employment forward to the committee clerk, within 30 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2018; and

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and the Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, and Canada Post.

I think that summarizes the discussions that took place over several hours with people around the table at the last two meetings.

I invite the members of the committee to adopt this motion so that we have a work plan to properly complete this study.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Colleagues, I'm going to suspend for a couple of minutes to make sure that we can get that circulated and that everybody has a copy.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

● (0920)

(Pause)

● (0930)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Colleagues, is there any discussion on the motion put forward by Mr. Barsalou-Duval?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon has the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their patience. We should, in principle, deal with this fairly quickly. Then we'll come back to our questions for the rest of the hour.

There are two very important things about this notice of motion. Obviously, cooler heads prevail. After the last meeting was over, I was able to reread my documents with a cooler head.

I really don't agree today that we should call the families affected by the accident. I think it's a bit much for this committee to be able to call vulnerable people, people coping with an accident as serious as this one. Given everything that's happened, we're all on the same side.

I know it's important for the Conservatives and the Bloc to get them here, but for once could we put partisanship aside? There are other ways to get good sources than calling witnesses from these families and making them relive this.

I think the part of the motion that calls on us to invite witnesses who have experienced a trucking accident is too much. We know what happened. We see that.

I would absolutely like to remove the reference to victim testimony, first of all, before we go any further.

That's the first point I'd like to make, Mr. Chair.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

I have Mr. Albas, followed by Ms. Nguyen.

Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To me, it's really shocking that we would have Liberals openly opposing having people here who have fundamentally had their lives changed.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Dan Albas: I don't think there is anything wrong with having victims here and giving them a voice so that we can effectively finish our study with the whole range of views on it, Mr. Chair. I can't see why Liberals would be opposed to bringing victims in and having them here.

I just hope that we can quickly pass this motion and get back to our witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Ms. Nguyen.

Chi Nguyen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I note in the new version of the motion....

I know we have had some lengthy discussions about the opportunity here, from additional perspectives, to make sure that we round out the study and to hear the experiences of those who have family members who have experienced some of the consequences of unsafe driving, etc.

However, part of this motion is a bit concerning to me—around the production of documents. I think the officials talked a bit about the time resources and challenges around confidentiality required to actually do this. While it is really important to have that testimony, I think it would be helpful for us to make sure that we're focusing on the parts that will illuminate the study and help us move forward. It's not to suggest that the information wouldn't be useful, but given the complexity of it and its resource intensiveness, I would like to make sure that we're really focused on hearing the witnesses whom we need to hear from and that we're focused on that piece.

I'm not comfortable with the newly amended version of the motion. I would like to continue the conversation where we were previously.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Nguyen.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start by addressing Ms. Nguyen's comments on the motion.

Last time, when the discussions started, I mentioned that we were open to the idea of debating reasonable amendments. My colleague has had nearly a week to think on the matter. She may have some proposals for us.

As for having the victims testify, I have to admit, Mr. Chair, that I'm really surprised. It wouldn't be the first time that victims of an accident or issues in the federal scene have appeared before the committee. That should even be expected, generally speaking, especially when it's the will of those people.

We aren't forcing anyone to come and testify. We're just saying that it's up to them to decide whether they want to come, if they think this is a good way for them to testify about what they've experienced. They may want to share that with us so that decision-makers, those who write the laws and those who vote, are aware of what they've experienced.

I think it's legitimate, especially since people have requested it. We've received letters from groups of people who are victims of these situations, who have lost loved ones in their families and who would like to be able to talk about it in committee.

Maybe the Liberals are actually afraid to look them in the eye, Mr. Chair. Maybe the Liberals have something to feel ashamed about in this regard. Maybe that's why they don't want to hear what they have to say. In any case, I'm very disappointed with the reaction of my colleague across the way.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

I have Mr. Greaves next.

Mr. Greaves.

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, colleagues.

I would also like to speak to this motion. With all due respect, I'm trying to get my head around the perspective of an individual who has experienced a road accident, who has been in a vehicular incident involving a trucker on one of our highways.

We know this occurs. We know this is a serious problem in different parts of the country, but as an individual who has been in that situation, who has been on a fairly empty and underused stretch of the Trans-Canada and has had a trucker collide with my vehicle, I'm trying to understand what that experience would offer me in terms of a perspective on the business model and the abuses of the tax system, which is ultimately at the core of this study and the committee's work.

The testimony we've heard has covered a range of perspectives that speak to why we have, within the trucking sector, such a significant problem of misclassification of individuals who are, in effect, engaged in tax fraud. That is the core of the issue we're examining here, which arises in part because of the consequences of conditions on the road and truckers and individuals who, as we've heard from many of our witnesses, are not sufficiently trained and not been given sufficient preparation by their employers for their role or experience driving these large vehicles, by virtue of the fraud being perpetrated here.

The perspectives that victims would be able to bring to the underlying causes and structures of the Drivers Inc. model that would be pertinent to what we're trying to examine in this committee are not clear to me, Mr. Chair. In fact, it rather feels like an opportunity, as we've seen previously, for some members of this committee to politicize the deaths on our roads and to use the deep pain and grief that we all feel at the loss of life and other suffering associated with unsafe road conditions as something of a wedge, rather than looking for solutions that are going to actually help to mitigate the cause of the problem in the first place.

In addition to that concern, Mr. Chair, about the kind of contributions to problem-solving that deeply traumatized perspective of victims might bring, there is the practicality here about the use of government resources, the considerable demands on the time of the public service—and, at this point, I might suggest distracting them from other work that the opposition members are often quick to criticize and quick to point out is not moving as quickly as they would like, or is not moving to their satisfaction. It is a significantly resource-intensive exercise, Mr. Chair, for public servants to comb through years upon years of documents in order to make them available to opposition members for their sole purpose of seeking to find something in those documents to try to embarrass the government with.

It is not, I would suggest, Mr. Chair, something that will really serve the objectives of this committee to try to identify and to enact actual solutions for a tax fraudulent business model that has become endemic within this sector.

For these reasons, Mr. Chair, I think this committee would be well served to continue the questioning of our witnesses this morning, to continue to engage in this discussion based on the ample evidence and testimony we've already received. We also need to move forward, rather than looking backwards and having not only further delay in our committee process but also seven years' worth of material that, I would suggest, is of rather vague relevance to the issues at hand.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greaves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In response to my colleagues, I'd say that I'm a Liberal because I firmly believe that we have a duty to show humanity and to show respect for families. Those two things are part of our Liberal values.

There's currently some confusion between a committee and a court.

This committee's mandate is to conduct studies. During the week, we have the opportunity to prepare by reading our documents and reviewing the witness list. I don't see anything in the committee's mandate that justifies investigating a vulnerable family. I have a hard time accepting that idea. There's no point in turning away from reality. It's there, and it has to be dealt with.

There's nothing worse than the pain of losing a family member. That mustn't become a tool for political persuasion. That's my opinion, and it has never changed. I've been through this type of thing before in other committees. I've been a member of committees since I got into politics in 2015, and I can tell you that I've seen it all.

However, what I saw today, namely the fact that you shared your time with the Conservatives, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, is called a coalition. That's the first time I've seen that since 2015. It's fine to share pieces of information with each other. We've all done that, including among ourselves, but sharing time with the Conservatives to propose an amendment or a change to the motion is a first.

To get back to the matter at hand, we didn't even know what to do about these witnesses, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. We didn't want to have them testify before the other witnesses so as not to influence them or make them more unhappy. In that case, why should we bring them in if they can't be here at the same time as the other witnesses?

There are human reasons and grief-related reasons that belong to the family. In my opinion, giving grieving families a voice wouldn't help the committee make decisions about what recommendations to include in the report that it will have to produce.

My opinion won't change. I ask that you consider removing family members or witnesses connected to fatal accidents from the list of witnesses.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Kelloway, please go ahead.

[*English*]

Mike Kelloway: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I think it was several meetings ago when I stated my concern that the goalposts were going to widen. I'd like to think I was wrong in that prediction, but it seems like that is spot on.

I also said several sessions ago that we want to get a report to government on this important study that impacts drivers, industry and people from coast to coast to coast.

I think we're seeing a pattern here—number one.

Number two, I'm disappointed, quite frankly, by the reference—not to quote Mr. Barsalou-Duval—that there's something to hide or that we don't care about victims. I think immediately when we go to that point in this committee or in politics, we're going to be in a very sad state of affairs.

I take it personally, quite frankly—though in politics you shouldn't take much personally—that we're said not to be here to protect people. I think in government, opposition, or wherever you're from, whether you're a federalist or sovereigntist, you have to protect the people in your constituency and Canadians. Now, we have a difference of opinion on that. But immediately when we go to that point, I think it destroys the argument for the person who's proposing that. I'm disappointed by that, and to hear that.

The member to my right talked about some points that I should add to.

It was mentioned that someone was flabbergasted. Well, I'm equally flabbergasted—more power to you.

I'm not sure I can see the differences anymore, on that side. I really don't. There's one big one, but there aren't too many after that.

We are here to provide a solid report to get in the hands of government. When I look at this study, it's absolutely essential for all of us. I'm not going to play political games and say it's not important to you or you. It's important to everyone. It's important to Canadians. We have to get those recommendations to government. I want to get to that point, so it gets into the hands of the appropriate people. Then I want to move on and do a study with respect to ports that focuses on the west coast and Montreal and Atlantic Canada.

I'm disappointed that we've gone down a road here. I think that we can get the car back on the road. I think we're not there yet, as MP Lauzon said. It's my hope that we can, in due course.

I yield the floor.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kelloway.

Ms. Cody, the floor is yours.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's very disappointing to see colleagues on the other side blocking a motion that simply seeks to hear from victims. There shouldn't be any fear of accountability. It's about being heard and validating what they've been through. I think it's our responsibility to know exactly what they've been through. It's a learning experience.

The end result is that we don't work for the government; we work for Canadians and for the people.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Cody.

Ms. Nguyen.

Chi Nguyen: Thanks very much.

I want to reiterate that I do think it's important to hear from additional witnesses. My concern is about the time, resources and effectiveness of the work involved in asking for the production of documents, when it feels like a bit of a fishing expedition. There are many pieces that are confidential here. The timelines around this would be very resource-intensive for the CRA. That's the piece I want to keep emphasizing.

I think it is important to hear from victims. I think that's a perspective that Canadians want to hear from as well, as part of the insights in this work. I think we can all agree that this has been a really enlightening and important study. I am keen to see our government move on our budget and be able to bring forward the actions that we want to hear out of this report. We want to see the analysis and thoughtful recommendations that will come from this really important work.

I think if we put the emphasis on where we need to be we can make sure that we do justice to these efforts and wrap this up in a way that makes sense so that we can move forward and continue to take action. I think it's been clear that our government wants to move forward with action. Part of that is that we're going to bring back the moratorium on the T4As. We're taking the measures and we've proposed opportunities to make sure that we're responding quickly. The other piece of it is that we want to have a more full-some report by this committee so that work can continue.

I'm interested in the parts of the motion that are about hearing from witnesses and additional perspectives, but the production piece for me is a continued challenge.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Nguyen.

Colleagues, I have Mr. Greaves, Mr. Lauzon, Mr. Kelloway and Mr. Barsalou-Duval. It looks like we've almost gone through everybody, and we will go through everybody another time.

I want to encourage everyone to try to find common ground on this. The clerk has been diligent in finding us resources until 10:51 a.m.. We have an hour. Let's try to do this so we can move on. As you know, we don't have anything planned for our next meeting. I just want to state that on the record.

Mr. Greaves, the floor is yours.

Will Greaves: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is frustrating to feel like these meetings continually have the opportunity to move forward in a productive way and to move this

study towards completion, at which point the government can act upon its recommendations and take the action that the opposition members seemingly wanted and are seemingly supportive of. Instead, by my count, I believe this is the third meeting in which we are seeing this coalition, if you will, between the opposition members really seeking to derail, for quite explicitly partisan purposes, the otherwise good work this committee could undertake.

[*Translation*]

It's unfortunate that the opposition members have joined forces to paralyze the committee and prevent it from being productive. Instead of discussing other important issues, they would rather delay this process in the hopes of an opportunity to embarrass the government.

[*English*]

This is the motivation, it seems, of the members opposite, and it is regrettable. The honourable member previously referred to the fact that we are all here to serve Canadians, and that is of course true. The question becomes: How are Canadians served by our continuing to spin our wheels on this issue and continuing to meaningfully delay the conclusion of our work here?

It seems clear that it would be highly unlikely for the public service to meet the seven years of production documents requested by this motion within the mandate of 30 days. We have a tension here. What we're seeing is the opposition hoping they can pass a motion that will set a 30-day timeline to produce documents that cannot reasonably be produced in that time, at which point they would presumably be able to start banging the drum about how intransigent the government is being on this issue and how uncooperative the public service has been on this issue.

It becomes more fodder for the 30-second clip production mill that is truly at the core of the what the government sees from the opposition parties. The platform that is taken in these committee meetings is not really to generate productive discussion much of the time but, really regrettably, to seek any opportunity to throw up dirt and embarrass the government when we could, in fact, be moving forward, not only on the completion of this study, which this committee has been focused on now for some time, but many other highly relevant issues to the mandate of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, a range of issues across this country that I think would be of great interest not only to the opposition members but to the government members as well.

I would encourage my colleagues to consider whether or not our time and, indeed, the public resources of the government and the public service are really best utilized in this fashion, and whether or not we would perhaps be better served by coming to a more reasonable agreement that doesn't simply set out on another fishing expedition that will really be used as an opportunity to tee up the preemptive critiques that the opposition party makes quite frequently, in fact.

I think we could really come to a better resolution, Mr. Chair, and I hope that the opposition members will consider that so that we can resolve not only this study and make the changes necessary to improve the safety of our trucking sector and the safety on our roads but also allow this committee to turn to other deeply pressing matters related to the health of our economy, the transportation of goods by land, by rail, by sea, the state of Canadian ports and the investments necessary to support the Canadian economy in these challenging times. There are so many different topics of interest to this committee, Mr. Chair, so many areas of common interest between all members that I hope we would be able to find a resolution that will avoid some of the more partisan and challenging interactions that we've had and allow us to move forward in a good way.

Thank you, sir.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Greaves.

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My intention is to finish with the motion. I'd like the part about witnesses to be removed from your motion, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. As soon as the committee has held those two meetings, it should adopt the motion immediately, without debate or amendment. It can then give the analysts all the instructions they need to draft the report. That way, we can ensure that this motion is implemented in a timely manner so that a full report can be produced. It would be important for you to add that to your motion. I don't want to make it an amendment. We're discussing the motion, and we just want it to be done together.

In short, we want to finish with this motion, and I think we're close to that goal. I understand the Conservatives' comments about the witnesses. However, I think I've covered the issue, and I don't want to revisit it. I don't want this motion to be treated in an emotional way. We have to make fair and equitable decisions about the Driver Inc. phenomenon.

Today, the secretary of state clearly demonstrated that there's a willingness to tackle this problem. He also talked to us about a budget. We have to start by adopting it. Then we can spend the millions of dollars that are needed. Officials are here to answer our questions and explain how those funds will be spent. That's important. I'm very much looking forward to discussing with them how they're going to spend that money so that we can achieve our goals and fix this problem once and for all.

To do so quickly, all the committee has to do is remove the part about witnesses from the motion and specify that, after the two meetings in question, the committee must immediately give the analysts all the instructions they need to draft the report. The analysts are eagerly waiting, and I think they have enough material now. We can then move on to other studies, such as the one on ports, and advance the committee's work.

It's up to my colleague to decide whether he agrees not only to remove the part about witnesses from the motion, but also to add

that the committee must give those instructions immediately after the discussion on the amendment.

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

Next, I have Mr. Kelloway. The floor is yours, sir.

Mike Kelloway: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to Mr. Lauzon. I truly second all that he just said there. I think there is a road forward and that Mr. Lauzon just provided that pathway.

Again, I know that time is ticking. Christmas is around the corner. The fact of the matter is that we need to finish this study. I think we really have gotten the major themes and major points in putting together recommendations to go to the Government of Canada. I like to think that I'm not going to envision myself having another discussion around this table with an amendment to the motion, or whatever the case may be, for two to three extra meetings—but I fear that's where we're going.

You know, we talk about a disservice. I think it's a disservice to all the stakeholders who have come here and those who are watching at home whose daily lives are impacted by this and are not here. I think that's doing a disservice. But I don't question anyone's motives around this table. That's the difference. I think when we get into situation with motives, of why people are doing what they're doing and what they're opposing, it's a difference in approach. It's a difference in philosophy. If we use that as the baseline for moving forward, I think we'll probably be in a much better place more quickly, quite frankly.

Mr. Lauzon also talked about the next study that we want to do. It is on ports, and it is tied to this study. To get that report off is important. We need to do that soon. We need to do it ASAP, in fact. Then we need, in my opinion, to get to ports. Why? It's because we're talking about major projects. We're talking about major investments in Vancouver, Montreal and Atlantic Canada. Bringing people in from everyone's constituency here, I would think, or thereabouts, is really, really important in regard to the investments that are going to be made and the leaps that we need to make as a nation to be masters of our destiny in terms of the economy, supply chains and so on and so forth.

You know, it is a bit déjà vu, but it is something that no one relishes and a difference of opinion. If we can really and truly complete this absolutely essential study for everyone involved—the owners, operators, communities and victims—I think we'll be in a far better place. Right now, again, it seems like every session this is what we're looking for; this is what we're looking for; this is what we're looking for. I think at heart of it, that's part of the problem. Part of the problem is getting to that end point so that we can start something new. That “new” is recommendations that will go to people like you—people in Transport and ESDC—and not, by the way, just the federal government. Throughout this study, we have seen time and time again that provincial responsibilities as they relate to this topic are not necessarily efficient in a lot of areas—I'm being kind.

We are here again. We'll continue to have this discussion, because there is a fork in the road. Mr. Lauzon pointed out some of the areas in which we can do a deep dive, find some resolution and common ground, move forward, get this study completed and not just say that we've completed it and put it on our checklist. It is absolutely essential to the country, to each province and each MP. I do not discount any MPs' passion for this and the importance of this, no matter what province and no matter what territory.

● (1005)

We're not quite where we need to be and I think we can be in due course.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Next we have Ms. Nguyen.

Chi Nguyen: I think we've established that hearing from additional witnesses has continued value. To continue to clarify where the intentions are for this motion on the production pieces, I'd love to hear from both the Conservatives and the Bloc on the value they see in that. We're still learning and still new to parliamentary life, so that would be very helpful for me to understand that perspective.

I know we're technically discussing this motion, but it would help me understand what's required in terms of resources. If the officials had to do this in the past, could they share what kind of resourcing it takes to produce this kind of documentation so we have this to explore? What are the constraints and challenges around that? If we were to do that, what can we do to make sure it would make sense as a path forward?

I want to make sure that we're focused on the pieces that are most critical for us right now, which is making sure that we can get to a strong conclusion with great recommendations from the analysts.

I'm also mindful of the time of our officials and wondering if it makes sense for them to stay on, or if we should give them an opportunity to depart.

A couple of those pieces would help me understand where we want to go here.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Nguyen.

Mr. Greaves, the floor is yours.

Will Greaves: I'd like to follow in the vein of my colleague who was just speaking. The honourable member is really flagging this basic and perhaps pragmatic question about what it would take to actually meet the requirements of this motion, if it were to pass.

I think it's a point that is worth belabouring, so I would like to elaborate slightly.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to ask the officials who are with us today to talk about the costs associated with producing extensive documents, as the opposition has proposed.

How much time is it taking officials to gather, review and produce those official documents this year?

How much is it costing Canadian taxpayers to produce those official documents this year?

Is this the best use of public resources, time and energy in the public service?

I don't think so, Mr. Chair.

● (1010)

[*English*]

We return to this issue of wanting to have a robust debate, of wanting to ensure that all members of this committee are satisfied that this topic has been thoroughly explored, but perhaps I could invite our colleagues to elaborate on why it is that this motion will actually advance our goal, our focus, of how to address a problematic business model, a problematic business model that has been, as one of the members I believe said earlier, festering for some time and has its origins in 2011 but hasn't been sufficiently addressed. It hasn't been adequately responded to.

That is the opportunity before us in this committee at this moment. Rather than allowing the committee to actually play that productive role in guiding public policy response, in guiding a government response on this issue, the committee is instead on something of a fishing expedition with this motion. It doesn't achieve the very goals the opposition members have fairly exhaustively outlined in their desire to see tax fraud reduced and to see unqualified, under-regulated and undertrained individuals no longer being able to endanger other road users and Canadians driving on our highways. There are real stakes in this issue, Mr. Chair, stakes that the opposition has been very keen to highlight during our preceding meetings and the proceedings that have come before us today.

Yet, given the opportunity to actually move our work forward and produce concrete recommendations that will address those very challenges, we see instead this continual returning to the well, this dragging out of a process and bringing in of more witnesses, despite the many witness from whom we've already heard. Bringing in more dimensions and more aspects or facets to this issue that might be explored, they are constantly moving the goalpost in terms of the number of meetings that have been requested and the number of witnesses we would hear testimony from.

It produces a context, Mr. Chair, in which I think the committee is impeded from playing a productive role in addressing the issue before us. It's something that doesn't serve the interests of Canadians, and it's inconsistent with what the opposition members themselves have said repeatedly on the seriousness of this issue and the urgency with which they profess to want to see the government respond.

At a certain point, Mr. Chair, I think we do need to ask, which is it for the opposition members? Is this a matter of great urgency that we should move on with speed in order to save lives and improve the safety of our trucking sector and the safety of our roads? Or, in fact, as seemingly is the case, should we continually extend our discussions and the number of meetings, continually expand the number of witnesses and the scope under discussion ad nauseam, such that we don't actually get to the point of addressing the problem or of offering solutions, or of being constructive in how it is that the trucking sector and the challenges it faces can be improved and these issues can be mitigated?

Mr. Chair, I would once again just return to encouraging our colleagues opposite to consider whether this union of the two opposition parties for their own purposes is the best way for us to move forward, and whether or not blowing up meetings with motions not focused on the core purpose of this study in order to score political points and film clips instead of working on the problem at hand is the best way for us to use our time together.

It would appear that there's an answer to that question, but I would turn to the opposition members to perhaps think about whether or not we might be able to move forward in a better, more constructive way.

I'll hold my comments there for now.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greaves.

Next we have Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor, Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to ask the witnesses, the officials, a lot of questions. However, time is running out, and I don't think we're going to reach a consensus anytime soon.

I'd like to give the witnesses an opportunity to leave the room so that committee members can continue this conversation.

• (1015)

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't think there's any objection amongst members to dismiss the witnesses and thank them for their time.

Seeing none, I want to thank you on behalf of all members for being here this morning. The witnesses are excused.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We would have liked to ask the witnesses more questions and learn a bit more about the topic at hand. We have to finish the report as quickly as possible to achieve our goals. However, we're receiving important witnesses, who have busy schedules, and we aren't giving them the chance to answer our questions. This meeting is being somewhat sabotaged by the coalition between the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois, because the motion is changing again.

It was unrealistic to believe that we would achieve our goals quickly enough and that we'd be able to close the debate on this motion.

Imagine how much progress we could make on this file if we produced a report that would require the government to act. The officials are ready, the secretary of state is ready, and the House is ready to pass the budget. That would enable us to move forward on this very important motion. Truck drivers, businesses and other witnesses would like their testimony to be included in the report. The analysts will be able to show what our objectives are. However, we're letting important witnesses leave today when they could have answered our questions about this motion.

The secretary of state was clear on some points. He answered the questions we asked him, emphasizing the experience he had that was directly related to the topic. I didn't know he had that experience, even though I know Mr. Long quite well. He worked in transportation when he owned a private company.

I was pleased to learn that the secretary of state responsible for the file has experience in hiring. He worked with drivers. He talked about drivers and what we call Driver Inc. drivers. Not only did he testify as secretary of state, but he also testified based on his experience. Let us take into account the good fortune we had today to hear the secretary of state answer our questions. We may have missed the mark with the officials, but we didn't miss the mark with the secretary of state. Despite his busy schedule, he was able to clearly demonstrate the difference between an incorporated company and a salaried employee of a company.

The secretary of state gave a clear answer to that question earlier. He explained very clearly that an employee is paid by the business and is subject to source deductions, whereas a business is an independent entity. Given the answers he provided, it can't be said that the secretary of state is unfamiliar with the file. That's what bothers me about this study. Right now, we're looking for political gains instead of working on the file and moving things forward.

The secretary of state also talked to us about clients. He talked about the T4A slip measure and the Income Tax Act. He spoke to us about compliance issues. He went further by talking about the Income Tax Act and information sharing. The secretary of state spoke to us about important matters.

The secretary of state has made it clear that the issue has to be fixed. The solution isn't complicated. We have to achieve our goals and draft a report.

• (1020)

The budget also has to be passed. The officials told us that when they answered Mr. Albas' few questions. They clearly told us that they were ready and that they could do it quickly. A date was demanded. It isn't a matter of having a specific date. Even if officials say they're ready, they don't have a crystal ball to answer such specific questions about the timeline and how it will be done.

Mr. Chair, the officials appeared as witnesses to tell us that it will be done quickly. The solution isn't complicated. Give them the tools, and they will solve the problem. We're here to solve the problem. Mr. Barsalou-Duval said that.

The secretary of state thanked Mr. Barsalou-Duval for proposing this motion and raising this topic of discussion in committee. That's our job. This is not the Standing Committee on Finance. We sit on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Mr. Barsalou-Duval brought a file to our attention. We dealt with it, and we found solutions. We could all resolve this issue quickly, with a snap of our fingers, by drafting a report. We were ready to do that, but we added meetings, resources and witnesses. We're once again at a dead end, which means that we have to deal with a coalition between the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives. That has been clearly demonstrated today.

What I want is for our analysts to recommend that we move forward so that we can resolve the issue of the famous tax evasion strategy. We have to get the money back into the government coffers as quickly as possible. The companies at fault have to be identified. Everyone has to pay their fair share of taxes. That's what I think is important.

It's also important to enforce the Income Tax Act. Most of our laws are in place. All we need is a little push. This committee has to be able to make recommendations as quickly as possible so that we can move forward. That's the greatest gift we can give ourselves to resolve this issue.

If we resolve this issue, then businesses can be saved. Let's remind ourselves of all the comments we've heard today, including those of the secretary of state. Some businesses have said that they're on the brink of bankruptcy. Why? It's because they're honest. They're told that in order to make money, they have to be dishonest. That's more or less the message we're sending. I don't want to trivialize matters, but that's more or less what we've learned. That's why it's extremely important to respect those businesses today. They want us to produce a report with measures and recommendations to ensure that we can move forward and solve this issue.

Those companies also told us that this involves extremely significant risks. It's not just a matter of financial risk. We're talking about the risk of destroying the economy. Why? The secretary of state has told us at least twice today. He explained just how important it is to have a supply chain in all areas, whether for the sake of being able to put food on our table or for the sake of being able to help all the businesses in each of our ridings.

The important thing, Mr. Chair, is not to break our supply chain. Our government is currently working extremely hard because of the U.S. tariffs that are affecting a number of our sectors. If we add in

others in the transportation sector, the situation will be even more difficult.

To ensure fairness and to give a break to the Quebec and Canadian businesses that transport our steel, aluminum and critical minerals, we have to complete our study and make recommendations in the report. We want to table it as quickly as possible.

• (1025)

I know the committee's analysts are eager to draft the report and get this study done. They already have a good basis of recommendations to do so.

The secretary of state told us about a budget measure worth more than \$70 million. That's significant, Mr. Chair. Where there's a will, there's a way. The government is willing, as are the committee and the industry.

The committee has enough material to go ahead and draft its report. It has heard from enough witnesses. Personally, I found the latest testimony from businesses to be very repetitive. I'm glad I heard them, but I felt that I'd learned almost nothing. There were some trick questions asked of the witnesses. There were partisan questions. However, there was nothing concrete.

Now, I'm looking at the proposed witness list. We were ready to invite some of the witnesses. However, the motion also proposes inviting representatives of businesses similar to others that have already appeared.

The motion also requests that all communications made since 2018 be provided to the committee within 30 days. That would take an incredible amount of resources, and it would cost the administration millions of dollars.

At first, I saw a flaw in our study. I thought to myself that we may have forgotten to invite towing companies to testify. After looking at my notes, I realized that we hadn't done it. I would perhaps have liked to hear from representatives of the towing industry to understand what the people in that industry are experiencing on the ground. They're picking up non-compliant vehicles. They could tell us about the accident scenes they've encountered. They're neutral, independent. They aren't too much like family, but they're aware of the traffic accidents that have happened. I thought we could invite them to appear.

Well, I fell for it, Mr. Chair. I was pleased to see that we were going to invite people from a towing company until I saw the motion. It proposed that the committee now require a series of documents dating back to 2018.

Mr. Chair, this study has to be completed as soon as possible.

Today, it can be seen that the Bloc and the Conservatives have formed a coalition. They're talking about how to proceed. They're proposing to share their time and put forward what they want.

I think the important thing is the topic of the study, which is the economic consequences of unfair competition on honest businesses. The longer we wait, the more bankruptcies there will be and the fewer carriers there will be. As Mr. Barsalou-Duval has asked a number of times, how many drivers have left the profession because of unfair competition?

I was struck by the discrepancy between the rates per kilometre for Driver Inc. drivers and those for regular drivers. Some witnesses have told us that Driver Inc. drivers charged 30% to 40% lower rates, Mr. Chair. Imagine the unfair competition from companies using the Driver Inc. scheme. That really stuck with me.

● (1030)

The minister of state reminded me of something when he was giving his presentation. The disparity or inconsistency between the rates affects not just government revenues, the appropriate tax rate and tax filing. It also affects everyone connected to the trucking company, those who provide training, those who provide supplies to employees, those who pay drivers a decent wage so they can support their families, not to mention those who have to bid on the contracts and fulfill them. That's how the market works. That's how it works in the trucking world.

My background is in the steel sector, and transportation affects people in the industry on both ends. I'll give you an example. We ended up having to delay contracts, because there weren't enough drivers to deliver the material we needed. I had arranged for employees to receive the order. You can't imagine how much delivery delays impact the steel industry when you're working with full-length heavy metals. You have to make arrangements for cranes and staffing; you have to set up the area. You have to change the work schedule. You have to find other work the employees can do, quickly. The impact is considerable.

Drivers play an important role in the industry, and those in the industry know that. On the other end, Mr. Chair, fabricated metals have to be delivered, and who do we depend on? Again, we depend on drivers. Now, companies hire more and more drivers, so they can be less reliant on independent operators. That's the new norm they've established. Most companies in Quebec and Canada now have their own trucking service, so they have to be experts in driver training, as well as in occupational health and safety. Quebec has the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, the organization responsible for labour standards, pay equity and occupational health and safety. Companies have to educate certain drivers on the risks of transporting hazardous materials. In our field, transporting hazardous and explosive products is commonplace.

Consequently, we have to stay on top of applicable standards and quickly adapt to changes in the market. That comes with responsibilities. Now, we are finding out how trucking companies often use the Driver Inc. scheme when bidding on contracts, in order to be more competitive. That means it's cheaper for companies to use Driver Inc. trucking companies for fabricated metal deliveries than to use their own trucks, as is the case where I'm from.

Therefore, companies have to take into account the fact that they are both the client and the provider of transportation services. I am incredibly eager for our department to have the ability to take ac-

tion. The secretary of state seemed to be well versed in the matter and very familiar with the situation. Keep in mind, Mr. Chair, that he has more than just this issue to deal with. He is responsible for the entire Canada Revenue Agency. This isn't the only problem that needs fixing; every sector has problems that need to be addressed.

Since his appointment just a few months ago, the secretary of state has taken this issue to heart, in order to remedy the situation as soon as possible. He made clear to us today how much he wants to do just that.

The reason I'm sharing my personal experience with the committee is that I would've preferred to hear what the witnesses had to say and been able to speak with them. I can assure you, Mr. Chair, that the companies I worked with didn't use the Driver Inc. scheme. We always stood behind our workers; they were on the company payroll, and we made sure they had training and the necessary licences.

● (1035)

We had workers who were from other places, and we always made sure they weren't treated any differently than our own employees were. We always made sure they had the same working conditions.

Today, the discussion has focused more on taxation, but the committee underscored the importance of public safety. That brings me back to my point in relation to what Mr. Barsalou-Duval said. The economic pressure felt by Driver Inc. companies led to driver safety—and road user safety overall—being neglected.

Every night, on my commute home, I spend an hour on Highway 50, which has a good bit of truck traffic. I drive very carefully because the highway goes down to two lanes in many sections, which means I often have to share the road with oncoming trucks. There's no barrier between the lanes. The highway isn't divided in many spots. It's common for a truck to veer into my lane, but I don't know why. I can't see what's going on in their cab. They do something and suddenly they've left their lane. I don't know whether they're texting, grabbing their coffee, falling asleep or whatever else, but the other vehicles on the road have to swerve out of the way and drive on the shoulder to avoid a head-on collision.

I've been dealing with that since 2015. Every night, I spend more than an hour driving home from Ottawa, and for 77 of those kilometres, I'm on Highway 50. I take my life in my hands every night, with every truck I encounter. I am so passionate about this today because I want the problem to be fixed. At the very least, I want to know that the truck that might hit me is on the road legally, that it's in good working order, that it doesn't have some mechanical failure, that the driver isn't exhausted because he drove way longer than he should have and lied in his logbook. We heard from witnesses that they were able to alter their hours by changing a single letter in their name.

I've heard unbelievable stories. I know enough to demand that the situation be fixed. Drivers can no longer be allowed to change a letter in their name or use a falsified logbook so they can keep driving, putting themselves and others at risk.

I think the safety considerations have been clearly laid out. We know how much work drivers have to take on, the workloads they have to agree to. We know that some drivers are being threatened. Driver Inc. companies are providing fake training. Drivers have trouble understanding road signage. They are ill-trained. We found out that they can get their licences pretty quickly. They get around the hours of rest requirements. They often drive more than the permitted number of hours. They have to take whatever work the company gives them, and they have to deliver their load in record time.

Drivers have no choice. They have to drive. They have no time to eat or drink. They have to drive even when they're exhausted, and the consequences for road safety are tremendous. I'm telling you this because I want us to put a stop to it. I think we simply need to ask the analysts to give us some recommendations. Then we could draft the report. I want us to be able to move on to ports and other important issues.

• (1040)

This is an issue that affects Mr. Barsalou-Duval and me. In Quebec, the Port of Montreal has undergone an incredible transformation. We need to talk about that soon. We talk about the role of trucks in the supply chain, but who puts the goods on the trucks? Port employees do. I invite my colleagues to visit a port. It's important for members of the Standing Committee on Transport to travel to see the trucks lined up at the ports, the thousands of containers piled up and the boats arriving, so they can see the incredible space and logistics involved. The best way to understand what is happening at the ports is to conduct a study, but for that to happen, we first have to get through this motion.

This is not just a security issue. The secretary of state talked about tax losses, which are extremely important, and regulations. It's his role to do that. The best way for a responsible government to reduce spending and do more with the money it has is to combat tax evasion. The Bloc Québécois tells us so all the time. Now we have the opportunity to have the best of both worlds. We have an opportunity to be a responsible government and to vote on a budget. We have \$70 million to put on the table immediately. The officials have told us they were ready. We're going to avoid the tax problems and fill our coffers. Everything is in place to help us move forward and solve all the problems related to the "Driver Inc." phenomenon.

The tax implications of that phenomenon are simple. We have less revenue to fund our social safety nets. The money that is lost to us could be invested in our ridings, just like the \$2 million that is to be spent on getting documents produced by public servants within 30 days. On that point, you know that anything confidential will be redacted. So you're making this request to be able to say that you have the documents, but that you can't read them, since all confidential information has been redacted, pursuant to the act, and that you already knew the other information.

I wasn't born yesterday. I know how it works, and I can tell you one thing: The coalition is showing today that it lacks the will to achieve this.

From the beginning, we've been talking about the division of responsibilities between the provinces and territories on this issue. There's a lot of work to be done on the provincial side. We've heard from roadside inspectors. They have told us that they didn't have the necessary tools and that there wasn't really a process for sharing information. The secretary of state talked about an information-sharing model for the Canada Revenue Agency and the importance of that. He was asked if that information would be made public. He told us that it can't be done because the documents are confidential or private.

If the Canada Revenue Agency were ever to examine a file in which my name appeared, I wouldn't want my name to be disclosed before the outcome was even known. No one would like that.

• (1045)

Shared responsibility and information sharing between the provincial and federal governments are very significant challenges. Enough solutions now exist to address the issues that have been identified.

Transportation, whether you like it or not, is a jurisdiction the federal government and the provinces share. However, we want to send recommendations to the provinces on the ground as soon as possible. I look forward to doing that. I look forward to going back to visit a roadside checkpoint to see what improvements they could make once the legislation has changed, new regulations have been put in place and a firm position has been taken.

The Conservatives haven't been in power for a long time, so I would remind them that negotiating with the provinces is a long and difficult process. Right now, the federal government has to talk to the provinces. Often, the discussion isn't even finished when a change in ministers occurs and the talks have to start over.

For the Bloc Québécois, that is not a problem, since it will never be in power in Ottawa. However, the Conservatives, who had an opportunity to be in power under Harper, know very well that it is not easy to work with the provinces and territories to change directions on certain issues. It takes time. It is our responsibility to ensure that we come up with solutions as quickly as possible to solve the issues associated with the "Driver Inc." scheme, especially from a tax standpoint. The provinces can then follow suit and put measures in place to solve the issues.

Why hear from bereaved families? I have experience in bereavement. All members of my family have passed away, except for one brother, and we were five children. So I can tell you that I don't think it's right to make them relive that again. That is not part of my values. I think we've collected enough material in that regard. New testimony will not change the decision to fight the "Driver Inc." scheme.

To establish intergovernmental coordination—that's a term I would like to use—not only do we need to have a process for sharing information, but we also have to establish joint and targeted control mechanisms. That has to be part of our recommendations. I expect there will be tools in the recommendations that the provinces could use to address this problem. To do that, we have to ask ourselves what the provinces can do, within their jurisdiction, to help us solve the problems related to the “Driver Inc.” phenomenon.

For example, gaps in classification, legal gaps and gaps in information sharing need to be closed. During testimony, we were told that it was extremely difficult to know whether an intercepted driver had committed violations in other provinces. Roadside inspectors can check whether a truck is in good order, but they don't have access to the information from other provinces.

Our government is committed to working to improve collaboration among the provinces. We have proposed a number of measures, such as those related to goods. However, regulations on credentials do not fall under our jurisdiction. That is under provincial jurisdiction. It's important that our report contain recommendations

to put certain measures in place in the provinces and territories so that they can be implemented as quickly as possible.

● (1050)

I have heard a number of reports, especially in French, on the “Driver Inc.” phenomenon. Radio-Canada reported on it, and so did TVA. The program *La facture* also talked about it. It has been talked about for a number of years. Many reports have focused on the role of the Government of Quebec. However, we realize that the federal government also has an important role to play.

I would like to thank those who brought this topic to the federal level.

One aspect of your recommendations concerned taxes. Taxes—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Lauzon.

Unfortunately, we're out of time. We have no more resources.

[*English*]

Colleagues, the meeting is adjourned.

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